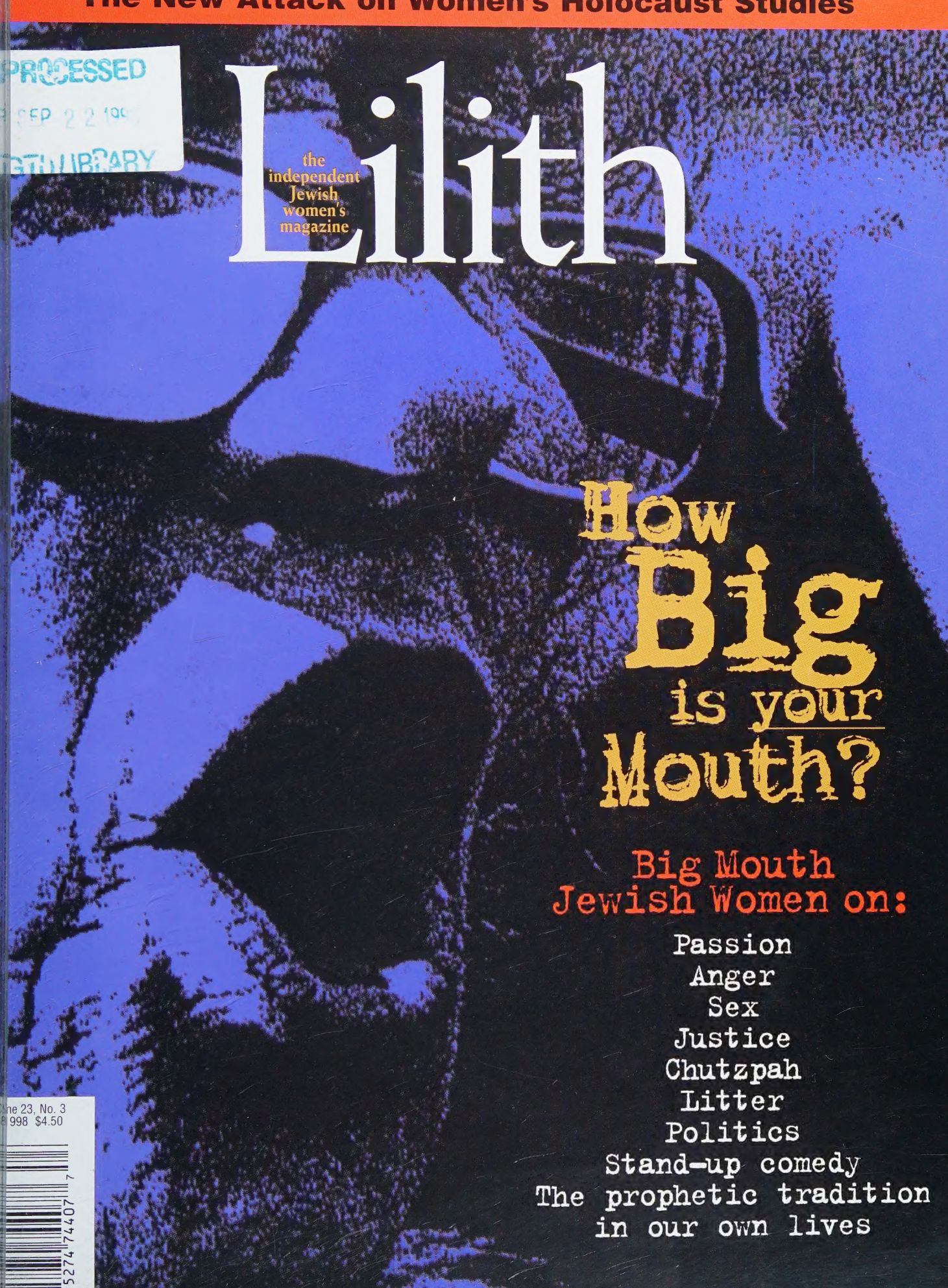
The New Attack on Women's Holocaust Studies

PROCESSED
SEP 22 19
GTU LIBRARY

Lilith

the independent Jewish women's magazine



How Big is your Mouth?

Big Mouth Jewish Women on:

Passion
Anger
Sex
Justice
Chutzpah
Litter
Politics
Stand-up comedy
The prophetic tradition in our own lives

ne 23, No. 3
998 $4.50

The Family Collecting Tradition Continues

The Rosenthal Collection Limited Edition

Rosh Hashana Mezuzah

To celebrate the new year, the Rosenthal Collection has created this new mezuzah, the fourth in a series beginning with 5756. Formed in fire, flames of rich jeweler's bronze surround a radiant tapestry of rare art glass. Individually handcrafted, highlighted with 14K gold, and fused under crystal, the result is a unique rainbow of iridescent colors that rival the beauty of nature.

EDITION LIMIT
1000 WORLDWIDE
Exclusively available through a select group of galleries and directly through the Rosenthal Collection, this fourth annual issue in what has become a treasured collectors series of Rosh Hashana Mezuzot is individually numbered and bears the mark of the Rosenthal Collection.

SPECIAL ISSUE PRICE
$110 includes one gift boxed mezuzah, a certificate of authenticity, reference material on the mezuzah tradition, paper scroll, brass nails for hanging and a FREE display stand ($20 value).

FULL SATISFACTION GUARANTEE
All mezuzah are sent on approval and may be returned at the studio's expense.

Available at these fine galleries or call 1-800-962-1545 to locate the galleries nearest you.

Temple of Aaron St. Paul, MN • **Main Gallery** Greenville, SC • **Inspiration** New Rochelle, NY
Shaare Emeth St. Louis, MO • **Artrages** Altamonte Springs, FL • **Beth El** Omaha, NE
Quiet Pleasures Andover, MA • **Chosen Treasures** Atlanta, GA • **Temple Emanuel** Denver, CO
Tradition Rochester, NY • **Dashka Roth** New Orleans, LA • **Fireworks** Seattle, WA
Jewish Museum New York, NY • **New Morning** Asheville, NC • **Aesthetic Sense** Mt. Kisco, NY
Eau Gallerie Melbourne, FL • **Concepts of Art** Lenox, MA • **Judaica House** Teaneck, NJ

R

The Rosenthal Collection, Inc. 4142 Howard Avenue, Kensington, MD 20895 301-493-5577 FAX 301-493-5578

Lilith

Volume 23, No. 3 Fall 1998

2 **From the Editor**

3 **Kol Ishah**
News of Jewish women all over the world

"Compassionate Touch" in Bosnia • JAP-baiting on trial in Scarsdale • Eating disorders—an Orthodox epidemic • Border-crossing Mideast music

10 **Why Is The Wall Street Journal Attacking Women's Holocaust Scholarship?**
Searing controversy is erupting over research on women's experiences in the camps, the ghettoes and the resistance movements. Deborah Lipstadt reviews *Women in the Holocaust*; Paula Hyman, Marion Kaplan, Lore Segal join her in its defense.

14 **Only Connect...**
How do we integrate who we are with who we've been? How can we integrate past friends, other cities, buried experiences into present lives? Two tales bind then and now:

- **Bob&Arline&Norm&Alyce**
by Susan Schnur

A widow and widower (grieving separately but in parallel) are surprised by joy in finding each other.

- **Recovering Memory**
by Eva Metzger Brown

A psychologist goes across one ocean and 55 years to pick up a little girl—herself—stranded on a curb.

32 **Fresh Voices**
Four young first novelists tell what spurs them to write such terrific fiction.

18 **Big Mouths**
by Susan Schnur

At last we can begin to understand the power of speaking out, and why it's a Jewish woman's birthright. Our resident rabbi analyzes the phenomenon of the loud-mouthed, justice-seeking hollerers we've all met (and feared and admired), and explains why, right in the prophetic tradition, these women are able to counter-dict both the JAP stereotype and the quiet-lady paradigm. Sarah Blustain profiles several real-life Big Mouths our readers have nominated as their role models.

36 **Girls: Resilient and Resourceful**
Young adult books navigate the difficult terrain of adolescence, helping readers understand the death of a sibling, sexual misbehavior by a rabbi, girls in Arab and Israeli societies, and more.

38 **Think Twice about Roald Dahl**
by Michele Landsberg

Rereading the classic author of *Charlie and the Cholcolate Factory* through a Jewish feminist lens, Landsberg marshalls convincing evidence of misogyny and anti-Semitism.

40 **Reviews**
LILITH reviews three powerful books: the encyclopedia *Jewish Women in America*, Rachel Adler's long-awaited *Engendering Judaism*, and a paradoxical encounter with right-wing women.

44 **Marketplace**

46 **Tsena Rena**
Essential resources if you're Jewish and female.

48 **Vagina Monologue**
by Eve Ensler

That heralded stage piece in which an unnamed Jewish woman from Queens talks about her fear of "down there."

Cover: Bella Abzug speaking to a pro-abortion group in New York City, 1986. Photographer: Kirk Condyles, Impact Visuals.

To contact LILITH: 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107 Phone: (212) 757-0818 Fax: (212) 757-5705 e-mail address: lilithmag@aol.com

Retailers: Contact these distributors to carry LILITH: DeBoer's (973-667-9300), Desert Moon (505-474-6311), Ingram (800-627-6247), Koen Distributors (609-235-4444), New Leaf (770-948-7845) or Small Changes (206-382-1980).

LILITH occasionally makes its mailing list available to organizations or publishers. If you do not want to receive such mail, please send label & request to: LILITH, Dept. LIL, P. O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834.

To subscribe: Individual subscriptions $18/4 issues; institutions $24/ 4 issues. In Canada add $6/year; other overseas add $8/year. (US funds only). Single copies $6. prepaid. Change of address, or delivery problems: send correspondence with subscription label to: LILITH, Dept. LIL, P. O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834, or call 800-783-4903 or 212-757-0818.

LILITH is published by Lilith Publications, Inc., a non-profit organization. Copyright © Lilith Publications, Inc. 1998. All rights reserved under international and Pan American Conventions.

Associate member American Jewish Press Association. Indexed in Index to Jewish Periodicals and in Jewish Abstracts. Available from University Microfilms International. ISSN 0146-2334.

from the editor

Fresh eggs from LILITH

The part that's left out of Susan Schnur's terrific explanation of why Jewish women are Big Mouths (page 18) is how hard it actually IS for many of us to speak up, speak out, speak our minds. It's a learned process. But we also get better at giving full voice to our ideas when we encounter successful role models—women who've spoken up and lived to do it again.

All the Big Mouths profiled in this issue speak out for causes, not out of self-interest. Which brings me to a piece of correspondence I had from my esteemed colleague, Rabbi Schnur, a while ago. She was encouraging me (prodding me is the truer verb) to brag a little about LILITH's accomplishments. For emphasis, she sent me an egg carton. On the cover of the box was an encomium to the eggs—how delicious, how fresh, the best in the world, the producer's family members stood by every egg, etc.—signed by the egg man himself. My esteemed colleague appended a note, "If Mr. Sauder can talk about his eggs and sign the praise, why can't u talk about LILITH—and sign the praise?"

The fulsome praise I give LILITH is usually in material intended only for the eyes and ears of foundation grantmakers and philanthropists. But now that we're on the subject of Big Mouths, here's my chance. For 22 years, LILITH has spoken out, loudly and clearly. Redressing gender injustice. Reshaping Jewish life from a feminist perspective. Opening discussion intellectually and spiritually, so that Jewish ritual, discourse and texts now come closer to incorporating women's experience than we could have imagined pre-LILITH.

LILITH has provided a school for Big Mouths—an environment where women learn to make change, as undergraduate and postgraduate interns, as writers, as readers.

Some recent examples:

■ LILITH's interns stay in touch, often for years after their tenure in this small office, and we're tremendously excited and gratified that their writings in the magazine have been reprinted in several anthologies this past year. And check out the first novel just out from our former intern Rachel Kadish (page 32). This year also, LILITH received two recognitions of excellence from the Rockower awards of the American Jewish Press Association, one for overall design excellence and one for an article on "Jewish Latency"—my report on how LILITH has successfully reached out to Jews in their 20s (that perilous decade when a lot of important life decisions get made, but when Jewish identity often goes underground).

■ In the wake of LILITH's groundbreaking report by Sarah Blustain [Spring 1998] on allegations of sexual misconduct by the late rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, dozens of women have approached LILITH's editors privately to speak of their own experiences. In Dallas, women have come forward alleging sexual abuse by a retired rabbi there; they say they were emboldened to speak up because of LILITH.

■ Professors and program planners call our managing editor, Naomi Danis, constantly for ideas about "Who should talk about AIDS and Jews?" "Who will write a letter to The New York Times protesting that article on Bat Mitzvah excesses?" Naomi makes original, one-of-a-kind shidduchim all day, connecting expert Big Mouths in every field with media people, event organizers and researchers via the Jewish Women's Talent Bank at LILITH, using files and archives and databases, but mostly using her own wonderful ability to connect.

How do we know the good stuff women do if we never let anyone recognize us for it? When the Woman of Valor in Proverbs is praised at the gates of her town she does not cut in and say—"Oh no, don't be silly, I'm not Superwoman. I have a sink full of dirty dishes, too. I don't actually do all those terrific things. My husband exaggerates."

I think the guy on the egg carton was right. These ARE the best quality eggs, and ideas, available. So on your behalf, dear reader, I thank all the Big Mouths in the LILITH office who cause these eggy ideas (germinal, remembering what eggs really are) to be packaged and delivered, fresh, directly to you.

Susan

—Susan Weidman Schneider

Lilith

In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple... The Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said, "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."
(from The Alphabet of Ben Sira, 23a-b)

Editor-in-Chief Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor Susan Schnur
Managing Editor Naomi Danis
Associate Editor Sarah Blustain
Advertising Manager Leslie Hollis Margulies
Art Director Laurie Douglas
Interns Tamara Fishman, Rachel T. Harris, Lili Kalish

Board of Directors
Frances Brandt, Barbara B. Dobkin, Yvette Gralla, Deborah Fuller, Francine Klagsbrun, Brenda Brown Lipitz, Natalie Pelavin, Susan Weidman Schneider, Rachel Josefowitz Siegel

Contributing Editors
Diana Bletter, E.M. Broner, Nina Beth Cardin, Elaine S. Cohen, Rachel Cowan, Sue Levi Elwell, Reena Sigman Friedman, Rela Geffen, Blu Greenberg, Judith Hauptman, Harriet Lerner, Anne Lapidus Lerner, Audrey Friedman Marcus, Judith Plaskow, Nessa Rapoport, Sandy E. Sasso, Mary Cahn Schwartz, Amy Stone

LILITH Magazine is made possible in part through the generosity of these individuals and foundations who make tax deductible contributions to LILITH Publications, Inc.

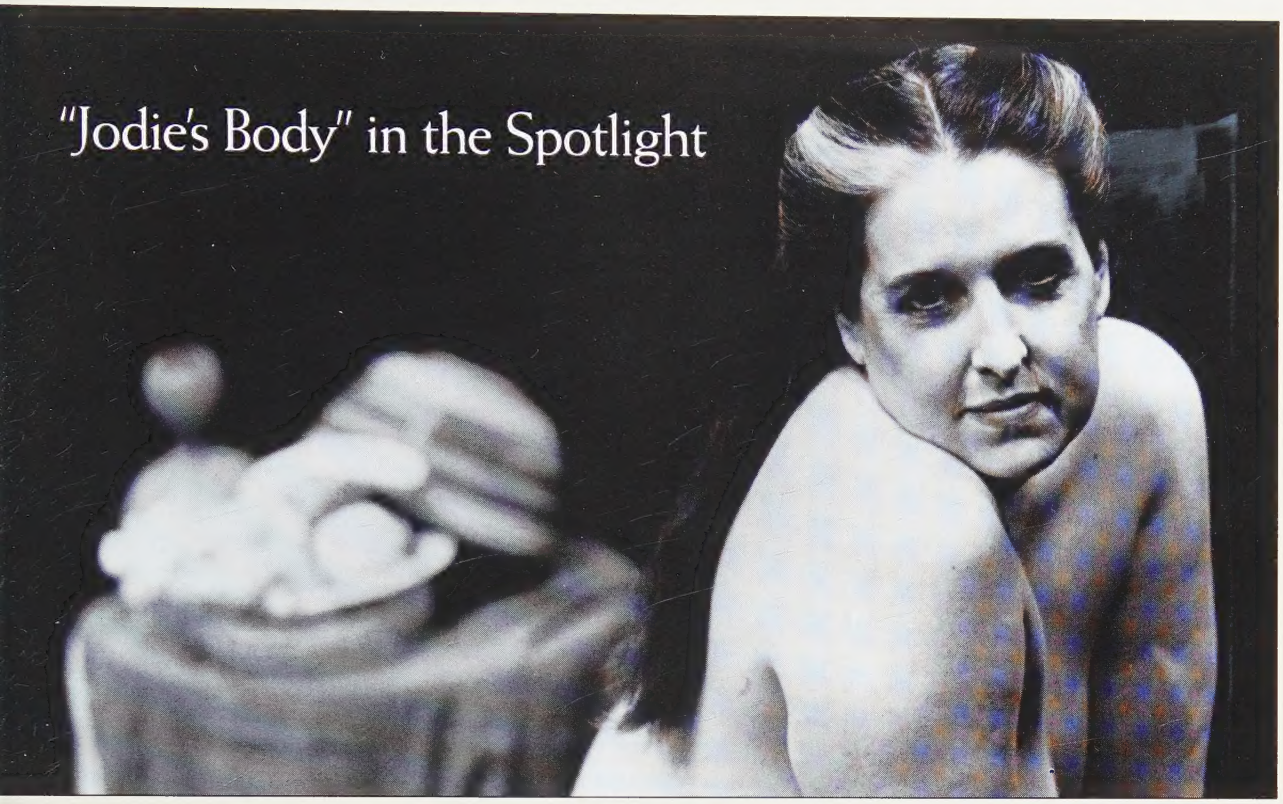
Sustainers:
Eve Coulson, Barbara Dobkin, Deborah Fuller, Paula Gottesman, Yvette Gralla, Francine Klagsbrun, Joyce Elsa Goodman Fund, Rita Poretsky Foundation, Anne & Harry Reicher J. Foundation, Sheri Sandler, Sara Lee Schupf, Rachel J. Siegel, Mildred & George Weissman/Weissman Family Foundation

Sponsors:
Joan Alexander, Marcia Burnam, Mutual of America, Natalie Pelavin, Rabbi Marion Shulevitz, Virginia Snitow, Malcolm and Barbara Thomson

Friends:
Penny Altman, Bente Yael Hoegsberg, Carol O. KurRabbi Elias J. Lieberman, M/M Martin J. Linsey, Melinda Lopin, Letty C. Pogrebin, Sue Felt Stevens

Donors:
Janet S. Barkun, Susan T. Baumgarten, Gloria Berkenstadt Freund, Joye K. Gilbert, Catherine F. Goldman, Karen G. Jaffe, Ellen Jaffee-Gil, Phyllis Kurland, Ellen B. Lerich, Karen Nieuwland, Siddy Rosenberg, Joyce Rubin, Sandra J. Rubin, Corinne Sabo, Harriet Silverman, Rachel Stahl, Lisa Stone & Scott Cantor, Rabbi Isaac Trainin, Sue Weidenbaum

"Jodie's Body" in the Spotlight



Lights illuminate the small stage, recreating a scene from every woman's worst nightmare: there she is, caught alone—stark naked. But the serene lighting and the actress's calm assure the audience that Aviva Jane Carlin is perfectly comfortable with her plump body and that we have no reason to look away.

In "Jodie's Body," a semi-autobiographical, one-woman show written and performed by Carlin, she draws the audience into an intimate conversation with her character, Jodie, as she poses nude for a drawing class. Woven through her lighthearted banter in which she affectionately calls her own thighs "girls" and gently mocks the art students' portrayals of her body, Jodie discusses more serious issues about the identity we choose for ourselves and the identity that others impose on us.

Jodie—like Carlin—grew up in South Africa with her liberal, British mother and is on stage celebrating the fall of apartheid. (Carlin is not Jewish, but grew up among a number of anti-apartheid Jewish families and was given a Hebrew name.) Her mother was perpetually overweight and raised her with reminders that "we are not our bodies, Jodie, we merely live in them." Jodie recalls how she began viewing her mother's big, strong body not only as aesthetically beautiful but as a force that could—and did—save a child from drowning and protect an African family from British soldiers. Through lively stories, Jodie compares apartheid to the less palpable influences that determine what is beautiful: "The structures you set up in your mind, that fat bodies are dreadful, are as fiercely held up as political structures, like apartheid." Jodie leaves her audience by asking, "Is it time to dismantle that structure, girls?"

—Rachel T. Harris

To bring "Jodie's Body" to your community, call (212) 459-2314.

Power Politics for Dutch Jewish Women

A poignant victory message arrived from The Netherlands recently. Sent by Bettina Sanders of the Dutch Jewish Women's Group DEBORAH, it reads:

"VICTORY for Jewish women in the Netherlands!

"After a struggle [of] 20 years, the Dutch Jewish women's group DEBORAH finally succeeded. Till 14th June 1998 women were barred from being elected in the Centrale Commissie [the national religious council of the Netherlands].

"In 1982 the Central Commission already admitted women in their midst, but the execution of this decision was blocked by some rabbis. DEBORAH was not defeated and continued its struggle. But the decision-making was in the hands of men and we were dependent on their good will. It took a long time of concisiousness-raising.

"Last year the Permanente Commissie [the daily board of the Dutch Orthodox Jewish communities] opened again the case. This time the deliberations were more in favour of women. In the bi-annual meeting of February the majority voted for female members of the national council....

"Today women are still not admitted to the Amsterdam Council, but it is a question of time. DEBORAH's members stay optimistic."

Compassionate Massage for Bosnian Refugees

Michele Herling, founder of Compassionate Touch, working with a Bosnian refugee at the Nagyatad Refugee Camp.

Growing up in Baltimore after World War II, Michele Herling was encouraged by her family and Hebrew school teachers to make the world more just. Years later, when Herling heard news reports about Bosnians losing their villages and being tortured and killed, the massage therapist felt "an intense pull to do something. I couldn't stand around."

In early 1995, Herling traveled to Hungary to offer "bodywork" to refugees. The Nagyatad Refugee Camp, in Hungary near the Croatian border, housed 1,200 primarily Muslim Bosnians in old army barracks on two acres. Many had endured forced labor, starvation and torture. They had lost relatives—in some cases their entire families.

"When I arrived, a nurse and a doctor asked me, 'What can you do for us?' I knew their need was incredible. I said, 'I do different types of bodywork.' It seemed like such a tiny thing to offer." Herling began to describe her techniques. "But my translator couldn't follow," she recalls. "He'd learned English from rock songs and television. So I just said, 'I want to give massage. To help people relax.'"

MICHELE HERLING

Bosnian children learning Compassionate Touch at the Nagyatad Refugee Camp on the Hungarian-Croatian border.

That evening, nurses brought a woman with intense leg pain to the massage therapist. "I worked on her, and the next day her husband hugged me and enthusiastically communicated through sign language that his wife felt almost no pain."

Naming her project Compassionate Touch, Herling helped treat refugees' chronic migraine headaches, panic attacks and insomnia. The traditional Muslim women were cautious at first, and let Herling work only from their knees down. But by the end of her stay, they asked her to touch their backs, too.

Herling has been invited back to the refugee camps several times. In 1996, she gave a workshop to a group of children. "Immediately, they began digging their fists into each other. I told them it wasn't as extreme as shooting someone, but it was a beginning stage of violence."

Setting some rules for respectful touch, Herling instructed the children in massage techniques she playfully called the "catwalk" and "kneading the bread." She asked them what might happen if they did this three times a week with their families. "They answered the same way as children in New Mexico," where Herling lives, "when I ask this question. They said, 'People would be nicer to each other. We'd have peace.'"

Along with yearly trips to Bosnian refugee camps, Herling now offers programs to American school-age children geared toward enhancing trust, relaxation and nurturing. One child whose brother had been involved in a drive-by shooting "really felt soothed by the workshop," his Santa Fe elementary school teacher remembers. "I saw he'd had an experience of being heard at a really basic level."

"This work has reawakened my connection to Judaism," Herling says. The lessons she learned in Hebrew school now have a personal meaning. "I'm finding *my* way of *tikkun olam,* and sharing in community my sense of a compassionate Jewish God."

—Katie Singer

For more information, contact Michele Herling, 903 West Alameda, Suite 119, Santa Fe, NM 87501.

"Destroy All the JAPs"

A poem posted in a Westchester, N.Y., high school attacking "JAPs" [Jewish American Princesses] and suggesting threats of rape and mutilation has sparked a law suit to remove the perpetrator from his high school, the White Plains, NY, Reporter Dispatch reported in June.

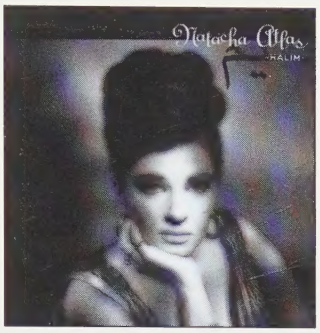
According to the paper, a Scarsdale, N.Y., high school boy posted a poem on a Scarsdale High School bulletin board which read, in part, "I hate the way that you talk, I want to destroy all the JAPS, I think that you are stupid saps."

In response, Arthur Morrison, a lawyer and the father of a female student at the school, is suing the school to have the boy expelled, the paper said. He told the Reporter Dispatch he brought the suit in the wake of several fatal schoolyard shootings in Oregon, Kentucky, Arkansas and Pennsylvania in the past nine months.

In an interview with the paper, the boy, unnamed, said the poem "was just a joke." He also said the poem was not meant to be anti-Semitic, and that JAP refers to girls "who act bitchy," the paper reported.

—Sarah Blustain

Rhythmic Border Crossings: Natacha & Sapho



Calling herself "a human Gaza Strip," performer Natacha Atlas captures the essence of her ethnic background and her cultural influences. Raised in a Morrocan suburb of Brussels, child of a Sephardic Jewish father and Muslim mother, Atlas learned Middle Eastern techniques of singing and dancing. She learned to be acutely sensitive to interracial tensions, but today is inspired by the role that a singer of mixed origins can take in bridging differences.

Finding a place in the British club scene, Atlas fused her Middle Eastern vocals with Western pop in her work in the group Transglobal Underground and on her first solo album, "Diaspora" (MCA). However, Atlas,who is a practiced in *raq sharki* (belly dancing), longed to further explore the Arabic musical legacy. She draws compellingly on Morrocan, Egyptian and pop music traditions in her new album "Halim" (Beggars Banquet U.S.), which means "beautiful."

Sapho, a French-Jewish singer with Morrocan roots, defies cultural and political boundaries. Sapho proved this earlier in the year, singing for more than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza City. Sending a poweful message about the political and territorial exlusion of the Palestinians, Sapho performed in Israel only on the condition that she could first do the show in Gaza. Sapho told The New York Times, "I did not want to be rude to the other half of the Israeli community who were against the trends of the current Government in Israel."

The title of Sapho's newest album, "Digital Sheika" (Barraka El Farnatshi Productions, Basel, Switzerland), goes straight to the heart of her Moroccan experiences. The *sheikha*, a wild, gyrating "woman of ill repute," is both admired and reviled for her disregard for society's limits. Like the *sheikha*, Sapho goes to the margins and pushes the boundaries.

—Lili Kalish

Opening the Boardroom Doors

Recent studies confirm that women make up fewer than 10% of the boards and executive committees of the major co-ed institutions of Jewish life. To address this shortage—particularly of young leaders—Hadassah has established a program to help women achieve positions of power and use them effectively in Jewish communal life.

The Hadassah Leadership Academy will launch a three-year program in October with a retreat for 150 hand-picked leaders-in-training from ten communities around the United States. According to national chair Renee Resnik, these women already are involved philanthropically in the Jewish community and are looking for expanded volunteer opportunities.

Under Hadassah's tutelage they will receive one year of Jewish education, one year of Zionist instruction, and a final year learning the nuts and bolts of community organizing, during which they will be asked to create a local social service program.

Stay tuned. It will be interesting to see if this Leadership Academy will provide adequate tools for women to pry open the boardroom doors, or if it is male attitudes (and not female skills) that need improvement.

Where Credit Is Due

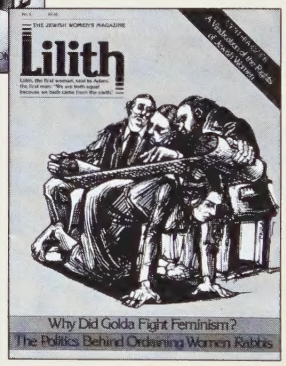
Jewish feminists visiting the Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia will find themselves well represented in the museum's new permanent exhibit, "Creating American Jews: Jewish Identity in America."

In this show, curator Karen Mittleman paid particular attention to the efforts of Jewish women before the 1970s. She has included a series of letters between 18th-century mothers and children that capture the struggle to remain Jews—and to remain families—while acculturating to a new land.

"What tended to get preserved about men's experience in those days was their ledger books," explains Mittleman. "[From women] we have these wonderful, revealing letters," often written on behalf of the men in their lives as well.

Mittleman, who is trained in woman's—not Jewish—history, highlights the feminist contribution to Judaism in a section on New Identities. Along with

Seder Sisters: The first feminist Seder took place in New York City in 1974. The 1991 gathering, above, is pictured in a major new exhibit of American Jewish life.



above: LILITH's premiere issue; right: LILITH featured in the Museum of Jewish Heritage.

Holocaust consciousness, Soviet Jewry activism and the Six Day War, Jewish feminists are credited with changing the face of American Jewry. They have inspired, she writes, an "outpouring of songs, prayers, poetry, new ritual and scholarly texts, . . . evidence of a revolution in modern Jewish life that is still ongoing."

Featured in this section is an issue of LILITH Magazine from 1979 with a cover story by Cynthia Ozick and a woodcut, created by Paula J. Goodman, of men studying Torah on the back of a woman.

LILITH has also found a place in the permanent exhibit of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, which opened last year in lower Manhattan, on the shore opposite the Statue of Liberty. The magazine's premiere issue can be viewed in the section on post-World War II religion.

—S.B.

Now you can order online the books and music you read about in LILITH. Visit our website at www.lilithmag.com

Take your place in women's history. Join today.

If you're a woman in your 50s, 60s or 70s, and past menopause, join the Women's Health Initiative. This landmark study will give us answers on how hormones and diet affect women's risk of heart disease, cancer and osteoporosis. Help your daughters and generations of women for all time. Call today for more information.

WOMEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE

be part of the answer call 1-800-54-WOMEN

Sponsored by The National Institutes of Health

How Battered Women Are Threatening Palestinian Culture

It was the morning after the Muslim feast of El-Adha, and Hanan, a 50-year-old mother of five from northern Israel, had done everything an Arab wife was supposed to do. The dishes were washed and put away. The table was set for breakfast. Even the children's shoes stood in line by the door, waiting for the day to begin.

Hanan took one last look around. She glanced at the bruises on her arms and the welts rising on her legs. Then she did the one thing an Arab wife was never supposed to do. She left the family.

After enduring years of physical abuse by their husbands, women like Hanan (a composite) now have a place to go. Thanks to seven Arab-Israeli women who founded the Association of Women Against Violence in 1992, Israel now has two shelters and extensive outreach exclusively for Arab-Israeli women escaping violence in their homes.

"The first question women ask when they enter the shelter is, 'All these women have the same problem I do?'" said Aida Touma Suleiman, general director of the Nazareth-based Association. "Each of them, until this point, has felt completely alone. That's why we wanted the shelter to be all Arab. Israeli Jewish women have one set of emotional and cultural conflicts. But the women who come here see women like themselves. . . . It helps them not to feel guilty for leaving."

After the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, Arabs in Israel scrambled to preserve a way of life that could survive under Israeli rule. But maintaining this traditional lifestyle has taken its toll. "Arab women withstand a lot of suffering and danger," Suleiman said, explaining that they often stay with abusive husbands because the family is seen as the last bastion of Arab culture in Israel. "As a national minority we turned inward after 1948, focusing on our culture to sustain us, but the culture is very chauvinistic and patriarchal."

One of the messages of that culture, Suleiman said, is that any Arab who questions his culture is the enemy. "Arab culture went from dynamic to static because there are so many things considered too holy to talk about."

The Association of Women Against Violence desacrilized one subject with a series of discussions on violence against women in 1992. The response was so overwhelming that one year later it opened the shelter, which has since housed more than 300 women and children. The same year, the Association opened a shelter for young women (15-23); it too soon filled to capacity.

At the core of the Association's operations is a hotline run by volunteers who advise women of rights and resources and often just listen. The Association also runs two halfway houses for women trying to launch independent lives after abuse. Although most of the budget comes from international donations, the shelters are partly funded by the Israeli government, and the Ministry of Housing subsidizes women starting life on their own after the shelter.

Counselors at the shelters take neither a religious nor a feminist approach. "This is a human rights issue, and that's how we address it," Suleiman said. "We help women work out their inner conflict with a culture that doesn't give [a woman] the right to refuse violence, that says she must tolerate everything for the family name."

Fatina Hanna, chairperson of the Association and a social worker, has seen countless instances of incest and violence but says even she must be circumspect in order to protect the privacy of those she treats. She is doubly careful when dealing with young women because any hint of trouble can put an end to all prospects of marriage.

A personal status law, proposed by the Association and now moving through the Knesset, would establish Muslim women's right to choose civil court rather than Muslim religious court—as required by Muslim religious law—in cases concerning marriage, divorce, alimony, custody and inheritance. In the religious Arab world, as in the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community, there is great opposition to weakening the power of religious laws over women's lives.

"The [new] personal status law threatens the authority of Muslim religious courts, which are one of the last remaining bastions of Arab autonomy in Israel," said Tagrid Jahshan, a lawyer with the Israel Women's Network. "Worse, in some eyes, it also threatens family relationships and the integrity of the traditional home."

"Tradition" is exactly what Suleiman, the director, wants to redefine. "Most people wouldn't see those of us who work here as traditional Arab women," she said. "But improving the status of women is the most traditional thing I could do. . . . I'm trying to make a better life for my daughters and the women around me."

—Alison Buckholtz

For more information: Association of Women Against Violence, P.O. Box 313, Nazareth, 16000; 06-656-6813.

What *Can* Orthodox Girls Control?

He is called "a magical friend" and a "human angel" by patients and colleagues, and is a constant presence in some of New York's most religious Jewish communities. But more than 20 years after he first entered the traditional Jewish communities of Brooklyn, Dr. Ira Sacker is still a secret.

As the director of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine at Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center and the director and founder of Brookdale's HEED program (Helping to End Eating Disorders), Sacker—not Orthodox himself—has treated people with eating disorders in Brooklyn's Orthodox, Hasidic, and Syrian Jewish communities since the 1970s.

In an age when eating disorders have become a cultural commonplace—estimated by the National Eating Disorder Organization to affect some five million Americans—few people know that observant Jewish communities are among the hardest hit. A study done by Sacker in 1996 found that in the Orthodox and Syrian Jewish communities in Brooklyn, one out of 19 girls was suffering from an eating disorder—a rate fifty percent higher than in the general population.

Twenty years ago, however, it was gut instinct and not statistics that drew Sacker to the religious community. "A few of the rabbis would let me into the schools, and I began to kind of talk about it. . . . Within about two or three years, I was at the schools and I could look around and see, clearly, that there were significant amounts of eating disorders that were right there in front of everyone's eyes."

There are many reasons, Sacker says, for the high rates. One is the centrality of food in Jewish tradition. (It "creates and celebrates everything," he observes). But more compelling for observant teenagers and children is the fact that eating disorders can be quiet, internalized ways to assert control over their lives in the face of enormous pressures: to excel scholastically, to help parents care for large families, and above all to marry early and begin families of their own—sometimes before they feel ready.

Sacker also points out that a traditional upbringing provides few opportunities for adolescent rebellion. In an environment where even cigarette smoking is frowned upon for young women, eating disorders become ways for teenagers to act out within the culturally sanctioned medium of food. Add an enormous emphasis on slenderness—in some communities, Sacker says, parents worry that their normal-weight daughters won't be attractive to potential husbands—and the eating disorder rates in observant communities come into perspective.

> In a culture where young women must excel at home and in school, eating disorders give them a way to act out.

For Sacker, the biggest obstacle to fighting eating disorders in these communities is a code of secrecy. Having a family member with an eating disorder, he explains, can compromise an entire family's marriageability.

"You can't tell the skeletons in the closet," says an Orthodox former patient of Sacker's who agreed to speak only on condition of anonymity. "Otherwise, it's going to affect your marriage." She claims that if one member of a family is believed to have any sort of psychological illness, that family is typically crossed off the list of possible mates. "The secrecy is terrible for these girls," she laments. "It's like a death sentence: they would rather die than someone find out their secret."

The paramount importance of privacy for observant patients was something that Sacker had to learn through trial and error. Today he arranges his clinic schedule to be sure that no two members of the same Jewish community have consecutive appointments, when they might encounter one another on the way in or out, and on HEED's inpatient floor he makes sure that no two people from the same community are admitted simultaneously. "Right in the beginning, I didn't know that they had to be segregated," he remembers. "One followed the other, and I never saw them again."

Sacker's willingness to accommodate special needs has earned him unprecedented access to Orthodox communities. "I'm an outsider," he says. "I never pushed. I knew that once you do that, the communities get very suspicious. And I would too."

HEED now treats patients from Crown Heights, Williamsburg, Borough Park, Ocean Parkway, and as far away as the Hasidic enclave of Monsey, in Rockland County, New York. One of Sacker's strongest allies has been Lubavitcher Rabbi David Goldwasser, of Brooklyn's Congregation Bais Yitzchok. Goldwasser, who began working with Sacker after bringing an anorexic student to Sacker's clinic, believes that people in his community are hungry for information, and that the rabbis can help.

"There's a lot of ignorance in the area," Goldwasser says. "Let's provide some words about proper eating, health, taking care of oneself, body image, self-esteem, and slip that into a few of the sermons or seminars. It's a very private illness. I think the first level is, let's get a little bit out in the open."

—Aliyah Baruchin

For more information, contact: Dr. Ira Sacker or Rabbi David Goldwasser, HEED, (718) 240-6451 or (516) 822-0324. For details on a new program for women with eating disorders who keep kosher, contact the Renfrew Center of Long Island at (516) 935-7400.

Our Legs Are Praying

When Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel returned from Selma, Alabama, from marching alongside Dr. Martin Luther King for voting rights, he said: "My legs were praying."

Today some Jews walk, and don't pray. Some Jews pray and don't walk. Some work hard for social justice and ecological sanity—but divorce themselves from Judaism and spirituality. Other Jews remember prayer and Torah, but forget to heal the world.

*The next generation needs to know this teaching. Not only to "know" it, but to be effective when they walk it: **Jewish renewal and the healing of the world are intertwined.***

Our task is to teach this practical wisdom to our next generation.
Only you can help us do it.

The Shalom Center

7318 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19119-1790
phone: 215-247-9700 ext. 77
email: shalomctr@aol.com

New from The Shalom Center...

Tikkun Olam, Spirituality, Environment, Sexuality, Cancer,...
The topics that are important to YOU, in ...

The Shalom Papers

Five pamplets discussing topics of tikkun olam with which The Shalom Center has been engaged over the past several years. All the pamphlets contain original articles by Arthur Waskow, director of The Shalom Center, and other experts in the field.

Please send me the following special pamphlets from The Shalom Papers:

___copies of #1: "The Earth is Filled with the Breath of Life" (theory and practice of Eco-Judaism, by Arthur Waskow)

___copies of #2: "Is Cancer a Spiritual Issue?" (articles on the links between environment, spirituality and disease, including a report of a symposium with scientists and Jewish communal leaders)

___copies of #3: "Our Legs Are Praying: The Theology and Politics of Abraham Joshua Heschel" (articles on Heschel's life, and his political/spiritual practice by Susannah Heschel & Arthur Waskow)

___copies of #4: "Sex, the Spirit, Leadership and the Dangers of Abuse" (an article on the sexual ethics and challenges of spiritual leadership)

___copies of #5: "Redwoods and Torah" (articles on corporate responsibility towards the environment)

Send $7.00 per copy of the pamphlets marked above. ($5 each for 20 copies or more.) Total Enclosed:

Name _____ Phone (day) _____ (eve) _____

Address (Street, city, state, zip) _____

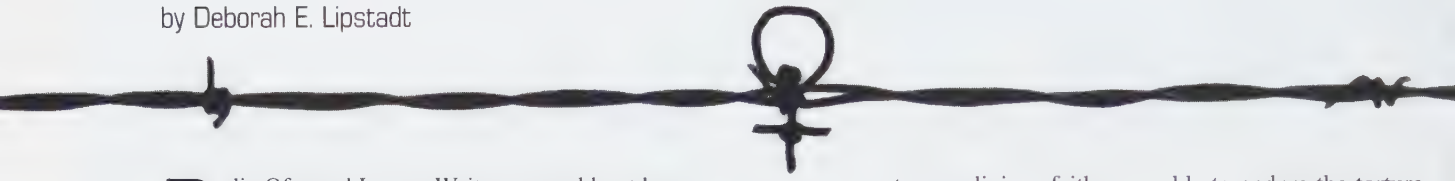
E-Mail _____

Send checks payable to: The Shalom Center, 7318 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia PA 19119

Why Is The Wall Street Journal Now Devaluing Women's Holocaust Experiences?

A major new anthology has brought together the work of serious scholars of the Holocaust under a "women's" rubric. In so doing, the book inspired a shockingly anti-feminist attack. Writing in Commentary magazine, Gabriel Schoenfeld accused these scholars of spreading feminist "propaganda," and commented—gratuitously—that "the general execrableness" of their prose "easily surpasses that of their male colleagues." In a baffling editorial move, The Wall Street Journal adapted this analysis for its op-ed page, making sure Schoenfeld's polemic lost none of its scornful, misogynistic fervor. In the following four pages, we offer a clear-headed appraisal of the book and some scholarly responses to the crucial new work of elucidating women's Holocaust experiences.

by Deborah E. Lipstadt



Dalia Ofer and Lenore Weitzman could not have imagined that when their edited volume, *Women in the Holocaust* (Yale University Press, 1998), appeared it would be drawn into a political maelstrom. Their serious academic study became, within moments of its publication, target for a salvo unleashed by political conservatives.

Despite being a foil for conservative wrath, this valuable collection of essays by 21 writers on women's experiences before the war, in the ghettoes, in the resistance and in the concentration camps makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Holocaust history. The contributors to this volume, the majority of whom are specialists in Jewish history, including the Holocaust, believe that while both Jewish men and women caught up in the whirlwind which was the Holocaust reached the same ultimate destination, men and women often were stopped at different stations along that path. Neither the authors of the various selections nor the editors argue that a woman's situation was necessarily worse than a man's. They do contend that it was different.

Some critics of the whole endeavor of studying women's Holocaust experiences believe that since the Final Solution called for the death of all Jews, to focus on gender in general and sexual vulnerability in particular might seem irrelevant or even irreverent. Some have even said "obscene." But it is axiomatic to note that the Holocaust did not have the same impact on all its victims. No event ever does. Age, geography and economic status are among the factors that differentiated one experience from the other: Child survivors, particularly those hidden, had a markedly different experience than did adults. A number of scholars have tried to ascertain whether Jews who had a strong religious faith were able to endure the torture of ghettoes and camps better than those who did not. Many wealthy Jews were able to arrange for their family's escape from the Reich, while Jews with no resources had fewer chances of avoiding disaster. Jews in German small towns in the 1930's generally fared worse than Jews in larger cities where there was an organized Jewish community to assist them. Ofer, Weitzman and other scholars before them recognize that even as one explores differences of age, faith, class, geography, and nationality, "unless one understood the condition of women, one would not understand the general human condition," as Ofer explains.

Some political conservatives have convinced themselves that the Holocaust has been hijacked by fuzzy-minded liberals.

This understanding, however, is not—as some critics would have it—a contemporary agenda that feminists are trying to impose on the past. One of the first people to call attention to changes for women as a result of Nazism was the historian Emmanuel Ringelblum, who did his research from within the Warsaw ghetto itself. In Ofer's contribution to the book, "Gender in Ghetto Diaries and Testimonies," she quotes Ringelblum's notes from the beginning of 1940 about women in the Warsaw ghetto.

> "Women's perseverance—the main providers. Men don't go out. When [a man is seized for forced labor], the wife does not let go. She runs after [the kidnappers], she screams and cries 'please, Mister'—she is not afraid of the soldiers. She stands on the long line—some are sent to work. . . . When there is need to go to the *Aleja Szucha* [the Gestapo] the daughter or wife goes. . . . The women are everywhere since the [men] have been taken to all sorts of work. . . .When a husband escapes

and his wife has to be the sole provider. [Women] who never thought of working [out of their homes] are now performing the most difficult physical work."

Ringelblum asked his colleague Cecilya Slepak to explore this metamorphosis inside the ghetto. Why did Ringelblum not *also* ask another scholar to do a similar study on how men's lives had changed? Because even then, in the midst of the horror, he recognized, as contemporary conservative critics do not, that the vast majority of the information being gathered by the group of ghetto researchers dedicated to documenting as many aspects of ghetto life as possible focused on men's experiences. That was the norm.

Of the unique experiences of women that have been neglected, Weitzman and Ofer suggest four general categories. First, the roles of women before the war. In Germany, for example, where few women worked, they had fewer Gentile contacts. In less affluent Jewish communities in Poland, on the other hand, women were the ones who had primary contact with the non-Jewish world and thus had Gentile contacts they could approach for help.

Scholars now find that men and women experienced the horror differently.

Second, suggest Weitzman and Ofer, because Jews anticipated that the Nazis would not harm women and children, they focused their escape efforts on the men. The emigration statistics for German Jewish men and women are, as Marion Kaplan observes, quite different. Precious visas were often used for the men on the supposition that once the situation calmed down women would be able to join their families. Parents willingly sent their sons abroad to pave the way for the rest of the family but regularly insisted that a daughter's proper place was at home with her parents, irrespective of the dire conditions.

Third, the edicts passed by the Nazis tended also to treat men and women differently. We know—and essays in this book attempt to explore why—that in a number of ghettoes the mortality rate for men was higher than that for women. We also know that a disproportionate number of women in their 20s and 30s were deported from the ghettoes for the camps.

Even upon their arrival in the camps women fared differently. Whereas a healthy young man might well avoid being immediately sent to the gas chambers, young women, who might have been selected to work, were sent to the gas chambers because they were with their children. "It is well known," write Weitzman and Ofer in their introduction, "that some of the Jews who worked on the arrival ramp walked among the women lining up for the selection and told the young women to 'give their children to the grandmother.' The workers, who knew that the grandmothers—and the children—were already destined for the gas chambers, were trying to save the lives of the young mothers. . . . Naturally most women clung to their children . . . and were sent to the gas chambers with them."

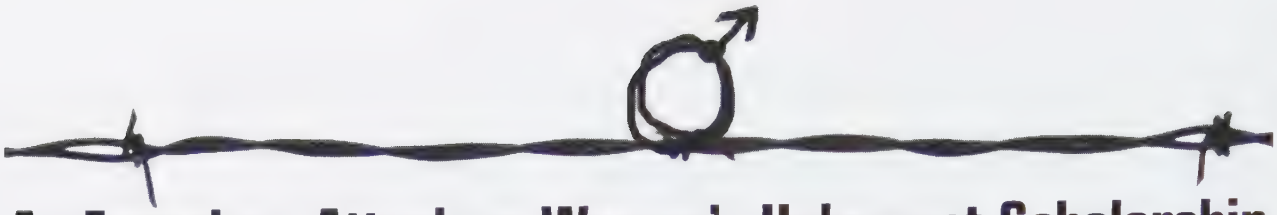
The most striking—and least discussed—difference that women encountered had to do with their sexual vulnerability, a topic that some of the contributors note has been minimized or ignored by researchers. The victimization of Jewish men during the Holocaust did not usually include their sexual exploitation. Even when women were not sexually exploited, they knew that was a danger facing them. Indeed, writes, Myrna Goldenberg based on her study of women's memoirs of Auschwitz, "Although rape by the SS in the death camps was rare, the women were terrorized by rumors or threats of rape." One woman recalls her uncle telling her "that he had witnessed a mass raping of Jewish girls who were buried alive in mass graves that they had dug." Other women had to face the terrible choice of using sex to try to save themselves and their families.

Finally, this book offers evidence of distinct differences in the way in which men and women responded to the Nazi policies, be it women's refusals to abandon their mothers—thus closing off the possibility of escape—or their ability to make meager food and clothing last in the camps or their leadership in the resistance movements.

In light of these clear gender differences in experiences during the war, which this book explicates so sensitively, the question becomes: Why the political maelstrom about this book? Why has this serious work become the subject of devious attacks in leading Jewish and secular journals? A small number of political conservatives have convinced themselves that the Holocaust has been hijacked by fuzzy-minded liberals intent on de-Judaizing it and using it for all sorts of political ends. These conservatives, both within the Jewish community and outside of it, need ammunition to make their argument, and they have found it in the study of women in the Holocaust. In articles in The Wall Street Journal and Commentary, Gabriel Schoenfeld has glibly dismissed all such work on women in the Holocaust as having nothing more than a naked ideological agenda. He argues that "feminist scholarship on the Holocaust is intended explicitly to serve the purposes of consciousness-raising—i.e. propaganda."

The best that can be said about Schoenfeld's critique is that he did not allow himself to be confused by the facts. Had he not come to this book with his eyes already closed as to its value, he would have recognized it as an important work that will teach us a great deal about the terrible experiences of both Jewish women and men during the Holocaust.

Deborah E. Lipstadt is the Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies and chair of the Graduate Program in Jewish Studies at Emory University.

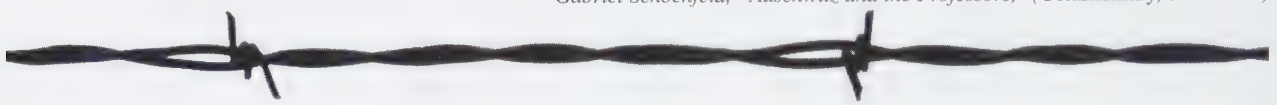


An Egregious Attack on Women's Holocaust Scholarship

Gender studies aims to redress the alleged neglect of women (plus various sexual minorities including homosexuals and the "transgendered") in scholarly disciplines across the alphabet from astronomy to history to zoology. It was only a matter of time before its zealous and accusatory gaze fell upon the study of the Holocaust, and now it has done so with a vengeance. . . .

That feminist scholarship on the Holocaust is intended explicitly to serve the purposes of consciousness-raising—i.e., propaganda—is, as it happens, something its practitioners proudly admit. . . .Were they just a narrow cult living somewhere on a commune and insisting on a macabre sisterhood with the dead Jewish women of Europe, they could be safely ignored. Alas, however, just as Weitzman and Ofer assert, they represent "cutting-edge scholarship in an emerging field," issuing a steady dribble of articles and books and increasingly assuming important positions in Holocaust museums, resource centers, and university enclaves. . . . If scholars who still study and teach about the Holocaust in a serious way were to speak up against [this scholarship], . . . we might yet begin to see a slow rotation of the wheel toward sanity and human decency.

*—Gabriel Schoenfeld, "Auschwitz and the Professors," (*Commentary, *June 1998)*



Women Scholars Speak Up

Paula E. Hyman:

It is ironic that Gabriel Schoenfeld accuses feminist scholars of the Holocaust of writing with a political agenda. For Schoenfeld, who presents himself as concerned simply with saving the Holocaust from being "academicized," is part of a right-wing political assault against feminism—in this case Jewish feminism—and the considerable and generally well-received scholarship it has produced.

Schoenfeld quotes out of context and refuses to engage the substantive claims that feminist scholarship has made for the importance of gender in historical and cultural analysis. In arguing that the Holocaust should not be studied in an academic context, he mocks courses that are described as "multicultural" or "multi-disciplinary" as "the most with-it." He quotes an anonymous statement that is clearly unrepresentative of scholarship on the Holocaust—that, if accurate, stupidly links the Holocaust with ecological disasters—to display the tendentiousness of all academic study of the Holocaust.

Schoenfeld grants that studying "'gender-differentiated behavior' under conditions of Nazi persecution" is "in itself . . . an undertaking . . . hardly without merit," but he labels all feminist scholarship as conducted "in the name of a naked ideological 'agenda,'" whose goal, he writes, is "to sever Jewish women, in their own minds, from their families as well as from the larger Jewish community."

He "knows" that feminist scholars of the Holocaust are only "paying lip-service to the inescapable truth that simply to be Jewish was to be marked for death" because they "proceed systematically to . . . paint the Nazis less as anti-Semites than as 'sexists.'" That remark is simply a libel of those of us—feminist scholars—who study and teach about the Holocaust.

To raise the issue of gender does not place it above racism in some hierarchy of horrors.

Paula E. Hyman is the Lucy Moses Professor of Modern Jewish History and chair of the Program in Judaic Studies, Yale University.

Lenore J. Weitzman & Dalia Ofer:

If scholars do not study the Holocaust it will be forgotten. And if scholars do not pay attention to the unique testimonies of women survivors, they will certainly be forgotten. These concerns led us to put together our collection of new scholarship devoted to the experiences of women during the Holocaust.

We did not want the lives of women victims to disappear from our collective memory. In addition, we wanted to correct the mistaken assumption that the experiences of Jewish women were always identical to those of Jewish men.

At a time when the powerful "master narratives" of male survivors like Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel infuse our consciousness, it is easy to assume that their experiences were typical and representative of all Jews whether old or young, religious or secular, male or female. They were not. As Jews throughout Europe faced Nazi persecution, Jewish women—as wives, daughters, mothers—encountered special problems and had particular vulnerabilities.

Why, then, is there resistance to the scholarly study of women in the Holocaust? Schoenfeld charges us with imposing the feminist issues of our time upon the past. This is simply incorrect. In 1941

Emmanuel Ringelblum, the historian who compiled the underground archives of the Warsaw ghetto, commissioned a special study of the experiences of Jewish women.

Others object to studying gender because any distinctions among victims may distract us from the murderous policy of the Nazis. For example, if women coped better in the ghettos, or if men coped better in the camps, we could, the argument goes, end up blaming those who did not cope as well, rather than focusing the blame on the inhuman policies of the Nazis. We believe, however, that invidious comparisons become obviously inappropriate and inadequate when we enlarge our knowledge and understanding of the impossible choices Jews faced.

A final concern of Schoenfeld's is that we are engaging in feminist "consciousness-raising." At first we were upset by this charge: our book is a scholarly work, not a political tract. But when we examined what he means by "consciousness-raising" we found that he was simply referring to our ability to show how gender made a difference. In other words, he is objecting to our engaging in "education," to sharing new knowledge and increasing awareness. Our book gives the reader new ways of looking at the Holocaust and raises consciousness about the importance of being a woman or a man during those years.

What seems to be upsetting Schoenfeld is that our work leads survivors who once thought gender was irrelevant to see that it can deepen our understanding of the Holocaust. For example, survivor-author Ruth Bondy was initially offended by "dividing the Holocaust and its suffering by gender" and agreed to write a chapter for our book only because she did not want the women of Theresienstadt to be ignored. By the time she finished, however, she had written a complex and moving account of the differently nuanced lives of women on the path from Prague to Theresienstadt and Auschwitz.

Such detailed portraits of women deepen our understanding of the Holocaust. Each voice helps ensure that the victims will not be forgotten.

Lenore J. Weitzman is Professor of Sociology and Law at George Mason University; Dalia Ofer is Professor of Contemporary Jewry-Holocaust Studies, Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

Marion Kaplan:

Why, until recently, have we looked primarily at men in studying the Holocaust? To raise the issue of gender does not place it above racism in some hierarchy of horrors. We know, to quote Hannah Arendt, that the Nazis did not want "to share the earth with the Jewish people." To raise the issue of gender also does not place blame on other survivors for the disproportionate deaths of Jewish women. Blame rests with the murderers. Rather, gender helps us to . . . emphasize the multiplicity of voices and experiences in the war against the Jews. Gender counted, especially, in extreme situations.

Marion Kaplan is professor of history at Queens College. This passage is adapted from Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany *(Oxford University Press, 1998).*

The "master narratives" of Primo Levi and Elie Wiesel infuse our consciousness. But they do not represent all Jews.

Lore Segal:

In his book, *Guns and Barbed Wire: A Child Survives the Holocaust*, little Thomas Geve drew plans of the gas chambers and peopled them with stick inmates. The child also observed the tendency, in the half-starved, half-naked population, to take sides—German Jews against Polish, northerners against southerners, city against country people. In the post-Holocaust era, we are still taking sides.

The recent publication of *Women in the Holocaust* has roused the sleeping eloquence of two predictable antagonists.

There is Mr. Schoenfeld, who quotes Robert Alter's prediction that bringing Holocaust studies into the universities would end by "naturalizing the horror." This is what Schoenfeld sees the other side as doing. He accuses them not only of the sin of academic jargon, but of using the horror for their feminist agenda. (He seems not to notice that his own Jewish commitment is an agenda too.)

The other side believes that it will "deepen our understanding" of the Holocaust if we study it from the viewpoint of class and out of a raised feminist consciousness. In a letter to the editor of The Wall Street Journal, Joan Ringelheim, feminist philosopher and director of education at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, expresses her sense of having been "maliciously," "vilely," "grossly," as well as "recklessly" misquoted and misunderstood.

Mind you, what the two sides are against each other about is not the Holocaust. The Holocaust is what they have in common. The quarrel is about the correct way to understand, the proper way to memorialize it.

I was playing Scrabble with an acquaintance, a woman, when something said, perhaps, put her in mind of her experiences at Auschwitz. She began to remember and to talk and the more she talked the more she remembered and her eyes began to stream, her nose ran, the hair came loose from its combs. That, it seemed to me at the time, was a way to understand the Holocaust. My acquaintance could not, very fortunately, keep it up, and she presently gave an apologetic smile, mopped herself up, and we went on with our game.

As for the rest of us, let's not pretend that we can keep the horror fresh and raw at all times. Let's give ourselves leave to go on with the game. We do the best we know how with our monuments and museums, by writing our memoirs, attending yet another conference, and by endowing one more chair of Holocaust studies. And by taking sides as if we could persuade one another of the correctest anger, the properest way to mourn. ■

Lore Segal is the author of Other People's Houses *and* Her First America, *in both of which the Holocaust necessarily features.*

ONLY CONNECT

► All of us probably have had the feeling, at one point or another, that our lives are a series of disconnected fragments—a loss unmourned, a professional identity we never returned to, a move cross-country. How do we connect these things with a sense of ourselves as whole beings? How do we integrate who we were with who we are?

Here we present two stories of integration. In the first, a widow and widower (reciting separate but parallel *kaddishes*) are surprised by joy in finding each other. In the second, a psychologist goes across one ocean and 55 years to pick up a little girl—herself—who has long been stranded there.

Bob & Arline & Norm & Alyce

by Susan Schnur

Not Exactly Four People, But Definitely More Than Two . . .

Norm Sussman, 69, and Alyce Heman, 62, met in the corridors of Evanston Hospital in Evanston, Illinois, while each of their spouses was terminally ill. The two had a nodding acquaintance with one another from years of a mutual friend's Yom Kippur break-the-fasts, but they had never actually spoken. Over the course of two years on hospital watch, however, Norm established a routine that included Alyce's husband, Bob. If Arline (Norm's wife) was asleep or away from her room for medical tests, Norm would pad down the hall and sit with Bob. And if Alyce arrived while Norm was in Bob's room (Alyce is a grade-school teacher and would come to the hospital after her school day, at 3:30), Norm would excuse himself and loll back up the hall to Arline. In this way, time passed.

Bob and Arline died within days of each other, and though Norm was unable to attend Bob's *shiva* (Arline's condition was rapidly going downhill), Alyce did manage to attend Arline's. As the month of mourning (*shloshim*) progressed, the new widow and widower phoned each other once or twice to see how the other was faring: *poorly.* During one lugubrious conversation, Alyce invited Norm over for a small lunch of *shiva* leftovers. The two picked at their food and cried.

After Arline's funeral, with the months privately drizzling by, Norm realized he had a problem: He had only written a small handful of thank-you notes in response to the many condolence gifts and letters that he had received. Each time he tried to pen a note, Norm recalls, "It was like Arline's funeral all over again," and he couldn't do it. Disconsolate, he called Alyce one day to see how she had managed it...but she hadn't. The two decided to team up, spending three or four long, tearful afternoons together, writing thank-yous in a blitz. So *much* time had passed, remembers Norm, that each note required a little explanation. "I evolved a phrase that went something like, 'Don't let the tardiness of this note detract from my appreciation,' and

Alyce seemed to find that helpful for her thank-yous, too."

As Norm affixed the last postage stamp to his final thank-you, he turned to Alyce and announced triumphantly, "Finished."

Alyce seemed shocked by what came out of her mouth next. "Does that mean, then," she said, with great, unexpected feeling, "that you're not coming back?"

Two years later, Norm Sussman and Alyce Heman became husband and wife, an event that both knew in advance would not be greeted with simple equanimity by everyone, including their four grown children. Indeed, Norm and Alyce themselves still sometimes felt a bit awkward about their early relationship. ("At the beginning," Norm remembers, "we were both shocked, surprised by what we were doing. We kept it from each other, because it didn't seem appropriate.") At times, the serendipitous unfolding of their lives continued to feel a touch unreal.

As Norm and Alyce's wedding day approached, they therefore wrestled with the best way to do something fairly complicated: honor the sanctity of their previous long, happy marriages and the families they begat, and, at the same time, sacralize life moving forward into new loves and new, unrehearsed blessings. Their solution was to compose a beautiful statement that would be read between the *ketubah* signing and the seasoned procession down the aisle [see box].

Recently, Norm realized—once again—that months were passing after a life-cycle ceremony and he was not writing thank-yous. The excuses, as before, are compelling: the fracas around selling his home of 32 years, of moving into Alyce's house and then selling that, and of buying a new home together and preparing to move yet again. But Norm also acknowledges that life's unexpected twists and turns can still be vaguely disorienting. The other day, for example, as the couple tried to compel one another to get going with the thank-yous, Norm remarked to Alyce quizzically, "I have this feeling like I'm rewinding the film and I walk out of your house backwards and that's the end of it."

Alyce chuckled appreciatively. "With you," she told Norm, "I have my laugh back." ■

Adult Children of Newlyweds

A New Video, *Daughter of the Bride*

Here we have a true, 30-minute love story (which was nominated this year for an Academy Award as Best Documentary Short Subject) about two Jewish senior citizens on Long Island, Pearl and Seymour, who, in a support group for new widows and widowers, end up falling in love with one another and getting married. Written, produced and directed by Pearl's 43-year-old daughter, Terri Randall, the film takes an honest look at how emotionally complicated such re-marriages are for all: for Pearl, the new bride, who has to decide what to do with all the hagiographic photos of her first husband, Max, that adorn the family room; for Pearl's grown children, who suddenly find that a horde of nameless strangers (that is, Seymour's children and grandchildren) have invaded the family swimming pool; and for Seymour, who chokes up with emotion under the *chuppah*.

A loving portrait of an increasingly common phenomenon: re-marriage in our later years, *Daughter of the Bride* is available from Direct Cinema Limited, (800) 525-0000, fax (301) 636-8228. —*SS*

The Sexagenarian Wedding

Alyce read the following (while holding hands with Norm) after the *ketubah* was signed and immediately preceding the wedding ceremony.

Even though we're not married yet, I've been empowered to speak for both of us.

Norm and I are still marveling at the fact that we are standing here, that we've come to this point in our lives and that we're both so sure of how right this step is for us.

One of the continuing wonders for us is how much a part of it are Bob and Arline. In a peculiar way, they led us to each other. It was their illnesses and deaths that brought us together. It was grief and mourning that we originally had in common. Most of our conversations centered on them.

As time did its wonderful work in healing and as we moved on and found that a casual friendship had grown to love, we found that Arline and Bob were still very much a part of us. They enter our daily conversation; their habits and jokes are part of the fabric of our everyday lives. In a sense, we are who we are because we shared most of a lifetime with them. Sometimes it still hurts to remember what we've lost and the years they've been denied. Many times, though, the memories are good and we try to remember them in their healthy years, with the special zest for living that they both had.

We especially want our children to know how much a part of us Arline and Bob still are. We're not exactly four people, but we're certainly more than two. As long as we live, they live inside of us.

Recovering Memory

"All I knew was that I had a scar above my ribs that no one ever talked about."

by Eva Metzger Brown

At age 54, I attended my first Holocaust Survivor Reunion. Because I was a child of survivors, I was asked to be on a panel called "Second Generation Children of Holocaust Survivors." I was also, however, a survivor myself, who had lived through what I had only heard my parents elliptically refer to as "terrible events" as a toddler. (I had emigrated to the U.S. at age 3, via Germany, France, Morocco and Martinique.) But because I had no memories of anything that had happened to me during those early years, I thought of myself only as a child of survivors. I also thought of myself as an American, not an immigrant. But an exchange during the conference radically altered these self-perceptions.

BEFORE

At the conclusion of our panel's presentation, a young woman came up to me and said, "You are a 'Child Survivor.'" I had never heard that term before, and I was taken aback. She was right. Being an American, being a child of survivors—those were only *parts* of my story. I was also a survivor in my own right. This new "label" had a profound impact on me. For the first time in my life, I began to take seriously my own wartime experiences.

Several months later, I had another eye-opening experience. An interviewer (for the Child Development Project of the International Study of Organized Persecution of Children) asked me for my earliest memory.

"I don't have any memories from the war years," I told her. "I have only an image."

"Images are memories," she said emphatically.

I had not known; I sat there quietly, as did she.

Then I said, "My image is of blood, blood running down my face." As I spoke these words, I heard my own voice: no *feelings* were attached to this horrendous detail from my early life. The professional part of me (I am a clinical psychologist) was disturbed, recognizing how totally severed I was from what must have been traumatic. I felt a sudden urgency to know more, to try to reconnect with that child who had, in some emotional sense, been orphaned all these years.

I began reading about memory (Daniel Schacter's *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past*, and Susan L. Reviere's *Memories of Childhood Trauma* were particularly helpful), and I came to understand that "implicit memory pieces"—that is, images, smells and sounds—are as important as the better understood processes of "explicit memory," that is, memories made from words. I learned that adults have memory "traces" that should not be minimized, especially in personal histories that include trauma—any trauma, not only the Holocaust.

I decided to make a pilgrimage to Angers, France, the small city to which my mother and I had fled (from Nuremberg, just after Kristallnacht), and whence I suspected my "image" derived. My hope was that I could retrieve something there, perhaps a second image, a fact or two, a feeling.

All together, the facts I knew were these: On June 17, 1940, four of us—my mother and I (not yet age two) and her friend and apartment-mate, Hilde Lindheim, and Hilde's toddler son—were walking near our flat, on a street called Rue Fulton, when we were caught in an air attack and blown into an archway. The incident was the prelude to a more horrific bombing three days later which came to be known as "The Bombing of Angers." During that first bombing, however, our little group was the only one hit. Hilde was killed. Her son (whose name and present whereabouts I do not know) was not injured. My mother's leg was crushed by shrapnel. And myself? All I knew was that I had a scar above my ribs on the right side of my body that no one ever talked about, and that I knew never to ask about. Why bring up a subject that might cause my parents more pain? This is the classic style of children of survivors.

I must add as well that in my thirties I became privy to another piece of information. During a routine CAT scan, three fragments of shrapnel were discovered deep within my brain. (True, I had seen an early photo of myself with a shaved head, but my parents had chosen to tell me that this was because of lice.) What did I do with this new piece of information? For many years, I told only my husband.

In November of 1995 a new journey began for me. I flew to Paris with my husband, then took the train to Angers. (In 1940 I had taken a train over the identical route, but no memories returned to me from that time.) Prior to setting out, I had contacted a French Christian woman in Angers, Helene Vernhes, now 80, who had befriended my mother a half century earlier during the war and been very helpful to us. My mother still corresponded with her once a year or so. Helene had hired a German-French-English interpreter, Jurgen (who, as a Christian German, had his own emotionally complicated connection to the war) who undertook some

research for me before my arrival. Searching through old newspapers and hospital records, Jurgen had discovered that, as a baby, I had been wounded in my head and side and was in the hospital, I'd been separated from my mother for four months, in a Catholic orphanage. I had not known this.

On our first day, Helene, her two grown children, Jurgen, my husband and myself talked, trying to construct the most coherent story we could from the fragments that each of us knew.

On the second day, we walked—the idea being to try to retrace the steps my mother and I had taken on June 17, 1940. We met up at the Hotel de France, admired the flowers in the square together, crossed the bridge over the railroad tracks (the same tracks as in 1940), and headed towards Rue Fulton. It was a gray, quiet day. The street was narrow, and Helene walked ahead, intent on trying to remember which exact building my mother and I had lived in. She stopped everyone who looked over 60 or so, asking if they remembered the bombing on this street and the four people who had been hit, two young mothers and two babies. She garnered no new information.

I was walking behind the others, trying to be quietly receptive to the surroundings. Suddenly I felt a powerful chill and was sure I would faint. Norman, my husband, sensed something as well, and he turned around, walked back, and put his arms around me. We stood there. Feeling dizzy, I waited for an image to hit me—an image of myself as an almost-two-year-old, my young mother, my little playmate, his mother, a calamity. Had I been in my stroller in this exact place 55 years ago, or had I been walking with my little friend? Nothing. Suddenly, I felt something completely unexpected, an *enormous* sadness coming up and up and up, as if from some huge, dark underground place. Up and up, intense, like an inner black cloud freeing itself from the downward pull of gravity. What surfaced was a great and heavy *sadness*. The others continued walking. I began to weep.

AFTER

Later that day we visited the hospital grounds, a square that consisted of many buildings, including the Catholic orphanage where I had lived for four months, and an imposing church. The single building that remained unaltered from before the war was the church. As I passed in front of it, that same unbidden, primordial sadness welled up inside me from some deep, deep place of hiding. Tears spilled again.

On my return to the States, some people asked me, incredulously, "You went to Europe to find a *feeling*?" Yes, without really knowing what I was searching for, that is what I went to Europe to find. For me, finding my own genuine feelings of sadness has made a tremendous difference. I now see Rue Fulton and it is next to the railway station and over the bridge from the Hotel de France. I see it expressly as it is and as it was. I feel the pain of being there with my mother and another mother who is "murdered" there. I feel how very wrong it is for this to happen to a little girl, her mother, her mother's friend, and her mother's friend's son. I feel grateful that I was able to stand in that dangerous place again, 55 years later, with a husband who held me in his arms, and made it safe.

I have recovered much as a result of my pilgrimage. My work as a clinical psychologist has been greatly enriched and expanded to include new work with the children and grandchildren of those who have survived genocide (or other forms of trauma). I am now a trauma specialist. Once I was able to *feel* my story as actually "mine," I was able to begin grieving my own losses and heal from wounds deeply felt within my being. I feel newly connected within myself, and energized and empowered to be available to others in fresh ways.

When I witnessed the Oklahoma bombing on television and saw the little child limp in her rescuer's arms, I knew that was *my* story. Until recently, the world (including the mental health world), did not recognize that very young children *also* have stories that have an indelible impact upon them, and that they need to be listened to and validated.

I was raised in silence, and I was made silent. I raised my own children in silence. But my trip to Angers was the beginning of the end of that. I now talk about the Holocaust, write about the Holocaust, and am open to my grown children's questions for the first time.

My mother's amputation is no longer a secret that everybody sees. Her great-grandchildren see the prosthesis and ask questions. I now know how deeply one generation's traumatic experience spills into the next and the next and the next...especially when coupled with silence. I can now talk with my grandchildren about the war and feel it is safe for all of us: because I am still their grandma who laughs and talks and hugs no matter what difficulties befell her in the war as a very young child.

Most significantly, perhaps, my revisit to Angers gave me three female heroes, each of them a new presence in my life that has been strengthening and liberating: first, my mother, who survived the war with one leg, which not too many amputees did; second, Helen Vernhes, who altruistically went out of her way to save an endangered Jewish family; third, myself, because I went back and trod that road where no one in my family was "allowed" to go. In doing so, I broke through a great inner numbness and fear. I breached the "concrete wall" of silence, and freed myself from many unconscious ghosts. The gains from this have changed my life. ■

Eva Metzger Brown is the project director of Intergenerational Healing in Holocaust Families and a clinical psychologist and mediator in private practice in Amherst, MA. This article is part of a yet-unpublished memoir, Through the Concrete Wall: A Child Survivor Comes Out of Hiding. *She can be reached by e-mail at embrown@psych.umass.edu*

Let us now praise Big-Mouthed Jewish Women

Who's Afraid of Authoritative, Empathic, Justice-Seeking Jewish Women?

(everyone who denigrates us by calling us JAPs)

by Rabbi Susan Schnur

Last year, John Tierney wrote an essay for The New York Times about what transpired when he offered a hand to an elderly woman struggling with groceries on West 23rd Street. Tierney and the woman (whose name was Miriam Seigel, and whose age was 91) began to chat, but soon they were distracted by two teenage girls loudly exchanging obscenities. One threw an empty bottle on the ground.

Tierney describes what happened next:

Mrs. Seigel promptly intervened.

"You pick that up," she said sternly to the girl, who was twice her size. "The sidewalk is not a trash can."

Tierney writes that the girl was so stunned by the absolute tone of authority coming from the mouth of this ancient tiny lady that she stood there dumbstruck. The girl didn't obey Miriam Seigel, but she didn't argue either. "She seemed to be experiencing a novel sensation—shame," concludes Tierney. "It occurred to me then that New York might be a better place if more of us emulated Mrs. Seigel."

Over the next few weeks, Tierney tries to do just that, but he recognizes that not everyone has a a gift for prophetic outreach and moral gauntlet-throwing. (Older Jewish women, perhaps, have the corner on this market.) He phones Mrs. Seigel for help, pen in hand. Okay, he says to her, someone is making a racket on the street, *what do I say?*

Miriam Seigel answers:

"If there's someone out there on the street making noise, what I would do is just go right out and talk to him."

"What would you say?"

"I'd say: 'Hey, cut it out. You're annoying people. You don't live alone in this world.'"

Fully armed, Tierney takes to the streets. "Hey, you're annoying people," he chastises boors. "Cut that out! You don't live alone in this world!" he tells drivers who sit on their horns, and other antisocial types. He's into it, writing about it in The New York Times, feeling empowered, on the side of biblical prophets, on the side of angels, on the side of *loudmouthed Jewish females.* "You think you live alone in this world? The sidewalk is not a trash can! Hey, cut that out!"

Girl prophets

We at LILITH, needless to say, revere the Miriam Seigels of this world. A few of us may actually be Miriam Seigels, but most of us are just Miriam Seigel wannabes, trying, like Tierney, to get better at stumping boldly for things that count: fairness, the common weal, the rights and feelings of underdogs, the status of women—for whatever makes the world a better place.

In biblical terms, Jewish loudmouths are indeed "prophets"—relentless pains in the ass like Isaiah, Jeremiah or Ezekiel, who never shut up about society's failings and who rant, shout, berate and harrangue for social betterment. We are decidedly not priests (that other prototype of religious leader), institutional conservatives who anchor the status quo. Our "prophets" include Bella Abzug, Cynthia Ozick, Betty Friedan, Sandra Bernhard, Grace Paley, Judith Plaskow, Letty Cottin Pogrebin, Adrienne Rich, Dr. Ruth, Judith Hauptman, and others. Challenging what's unjust in a phallocentric world, we are definitely a counterculture—in the sense that our values are not held by the larger society.

Until now, in Jewish society, misogyny (often exercise by those who stereotype Jewish women as self-centered "JAPs") has robbed us of much of our pride and fearlessness. The ugly JAP stereotype, which LILITH has written about extensively, has been a counterphobic response to Jewish women's strength and the big-mouth zeitgeist.

Maida Solomon, in a loudmouthed recent book, *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* (edited by Joyce Antler), reminds us that we Jewish women are living in an unprecedentedly receptive moment of history. "The potential for self-empowerment in Jewish women's lives through the grassroots intersection of feminism and Judaism," she writes, "takes my breath away." In other words, there has never been a better time to be Jewish and female and have a huge mouth.

The amount of talk by women has been measured less against the amount of men's talk than against the expectation of female silence

—Gloria Steinem

SANDRA BERNHARD. PHOTO © ROBERT SEBREE.

Last spring, LILITH put out a call to readers: *"Send us the names of fabulous Jewish women with BIG MOUTHS who speak their minds, shoot from the hip, talk turkey, aren't threatened by their own competence, don't get nervous taking up space in a room, call a spade a spade, and, in general, take care of business."* We were not surprised by the flood of responses we received (including, of course, plenty of women who nominated themselves), but we were surprised by how deeply these Big Mouths were held in the hearts of other admiring women.

Abby Green, for example, from Boston, commented that during her teen years, her one overriding goal was to make "less" of herself, so that she could be a more "perfect" American female. She writes, "I was on a crusade. I wanted to have *less* personality, *less* mouth, *less* boobs, *less* apparent brain, *less* strong views on things, *less* sureness, *less* ability to get stuff done, *less* gushy caring, *less* smelly Jewish deli in my lunches, *less* . . . you name it. But

This call for "Big Mouth" role models ran in LILITH's Spring 97 issue. In the following pages, Sarah Blustain profiles some of the Big Mouths our readers nominated.

Seeking: Jewish Women With BIG Mouths

For an article on fabulous Jewish women who speak their minds, shoot from the hip, talk turkey, aren't threatened by their own competence, don't get nervous taking up space in a room, call a spade a spade, and, in general, take care of business . . . in udda woids, for an article on female role models who are OTHER than the neurasthenic American cultural distaff ideal, send in the name of a woman who has inspired you with her (fabulous, Jewish) BIG MOUTH.

Send *your* vitals as well as *her* vitals to: Susan Schnur, LILITH, 250 West 57th Street, Suite 2432, New York, N.Y. 10107, e-mail: lilithmag@aol.com

then I spent a week at this high school program in D.C. with some loudmouthed Jewish girls from Brooklyn, and it was almost like breaking a spell. These girls were *living*—and being unapologetic about it. Their example saved my life. It gave me *back* a life."

Ethel Munk, from Philadelphia, remembers Big Mouths at her first teaching job over fifty years ago. "These two Jewish girls were afraid of *nothing*. If something wasn't fair, they screamed. It was effective. They cared about important things. I found them terrifying, but also thrilling. They became my role models. In retrospect, I would have to say that the ways in which I'm proud of myself are in direct relation to how well I've measured up to *them*."

I myself have a John Tierney-like memory of my first encounter with a Jewish, female, big-mouthed firebrand who bravely ignored boundaries on a standing-room-only subway car in Manhattan. (I am not a New Yorker.) Her behaviors still strike me as something to aspire to. An extremely pregnant woman was hanging on to a strap in front of a young seated man when the loudmouth (another straphanger) gave the guy an abrupt push on the shoulder, pointed to the big belly in his face, and said, "Where'd you grow up, mister, the zoo?" He sat there. She immediately turned to her new constituency (one had the impression she had lots), which was the entire car: "Ladies and gentlemen, this human being grew up in the zoo." And to him, "This is good. Sit. Enjoy." By that point, half the car was on its feet, offering the pregnant lady what she was due.

There is a groove in my brain that retains this subway crusader's syntax and delivery in the same way that John Tierney's brain now has a groove upon which is embedded Miriam Seigel. It's a classic, unmistakable recording: *definitely* Jewish and *definitely* female. It bumps up against every other compliant, self-negating female voice that's ever been stuffed into my mainstream head. On good days (when the reception is clear), it goes like this: "Where'd *you* grow up, mister, the zoo? The sidewalk is not a trash can." (You can mix and match here.) "You're annoying people. This is good. Sit. Get up. Ladies and gentlemen, this human being grew up in the zoo. Hey, cut it out! You think you live alone in this world? You pick that up. The sidewalk is not a trash can. Enjoy."

I find speaking like this a *mechaya*.

"Is what I am about to say amiable?"

There is no question that in mainstream America, males and females, almost from birth, get "shaped" differently. Studies of infancy show that girls are rewarded positively for docility, quietness, cooperation, caretaking and selflessness, and reprimanded for wanting their own way (which is called "headstrong," "spoiled" and "selfish"). Male infants are also, unfortunately, narrowly "shaped," being rewarded for cleverness, inventiveness, independence and self-sufficiency, and reprimanded for traits that are considered "girlish": caring, crying, deference, altruism.

In the book, *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, the social scientists Myra and David Sadker follow this thread once kids are in school. In standardized science tests in middle school, for example, the Sadkers report that girls, to a much greater extent than boys, select the "I don't know" option rather than take a guess at the correct answer—even though this option is the only one guaranteed not to garner any points.

Risk is a path girls learn *not* to take. Females become adept at reading other people's voices (not our own). We become skilled at following and reacting: not leading and acting. By the time American teens are in high school, males have mastered the art of sitting strategically in "power seats," where they are affirmed and spotted quickly by teachers. Girls, on the other hand, have learned to compete with one another for "invisible seats"—those behind tall students, in musty corners, and at the back of classrooms.

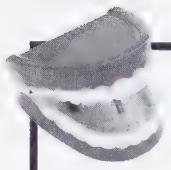
By college, these conceptual *mechitzas* are set in stone. In the book *At the Root of This Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst*, Carol Lee Flinders recounts how she was once asked sternly by a religion teacher whether the remark she was about to make would pass through Islam's rigorous "three gates": Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? The question simmered queasily in Flinders for a long time, until she realized why. As a female, she was constantly handicapped by all kinds of "gates" that no one seemed to care about or even notice. Flinders mentions three gates in particular that often keep us from opening our mouths in public. The first gate: "Is what I am about to say amiable?" The second: "Is it accommodating?" And the third: "Is it, uhhh, egads, *ditzy*?"

How come Jewish women are louder?

Given the chilly climate, then, how is it that *some* Jewish women (to a greater extent than other Caucasian women) buck these enormous cultural prescriptions and scale the ramparts to become Big Mouths? There are many answers to this, of course, but certainly Jewish women, like women from other oppressed minority groups (particularly African Americans) do not come from a stock that enjoyed physical safety, the latter a privilege that spawns the "luxury socializations" such as good manners, rituals of indirection and reticence, and female helplessness and discretion. These behaviors can develop only in times of peace—that is, when Cossacks (or KKK males) are not around the corner getting drunk.

Jewish familiarity with hardship and persecution goes back millennia, causing, no doubt, some natural selection over generations on the basis of "survivor skills": How quick were you, physically and mentally, in the face of that danger? How good were your "lioness" skills when the children were threatened? How alert were you? Decisive? Daring? These are all life-saving adaptations. Values become crystallized, too; that is, there is an explicit articulation of what matters and what really doesn't in life. For example, ideally, which takes precedence—whistleblowing for decency and responsibility or succumbing to shyness in the face of jerks? Forged in a crucible of ethical violation, Jews (from the writers of the book of Exodus to the *geshreyers* on picket lines) generally developed a reflexive hatred of wrongdoing.

Jewish Eastern European women whose husbands were scholars (an impressive defensive male adaptation to helplessness, hopelessness and poverty) were remaindered with the devalued domain of the *entire real world*. We consequently developed "virile" skills: assertiveness, aggressiveness in the marketplace, self-reliance and practicality, strategic shrewdness and fearlessness, and the ability to take charge, jump in, turn on a dime. Our momentary glimpse of Miriam Seigel's instantaneous anti-litter action shows a woman who is the avatar of all of this.



"Let me read you this!"

The latest battle for peace-activist **Esther Leah Ritz** lies in the Jerusalem neigborhood of Silwan, where the Jewish National Fund has asserted its domain over several properties now inhabited by Arab families. She's furious at their plans to bring in settlers to occupy the Arab homes. "Let me read you this," she grumbles in her gravelly voice, digging out the latest outrage in the local Jewish press.

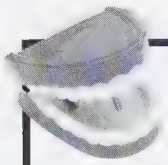
Though consultation phone calls on Jewish activism need to be made and the papers "who all have babies" are waiting to be sorted, Ritz has put all that aside. All day she'd been preoccupied with writing an op-ed in response, both as a board member for Americans for Peace Now and as her irrepressibly outspoken self. No one else would do it. "Somebody had to," the 80-year-old sighs.

Ritz has been, by her leadership in many major American Jewish organizations and by her own definition, an "establishment Jew." Because she's respected within the Jewish community—"even by people who disagree with me"—she has been able for the last 30 years to go around "plunking for peace," as she calls it, working consistently from her secure place to challenge the Jewish community to live up to its moral obligations toward peace. In the American Jewish community, making dialogue with Israel's Palestinian minority a higher priority than Jewish defense has not always been a popular position.

Ritz recalls how her official postings took her on mission after mission to Israel at a time when Israel's security was a point of national pride. One day, however, decades before the infamous handshake on the White House lawn, she rebelled. "I didn't want to go to any more air bases and see any more planes," she recalls about the official tours she was offered. "I wanted to see what was going on in the peace process. I quit going."

"I came naturally to it," she says, the "it" being her willingness to speak out alone on issues she believed in. She cites her how grandmother, who founded the Wisconsin chapter of Hadassah, took to grandstanding on how Henrietta Szold was cheated out of her accolades because she was a woman. And she recalls her own campus activism in the 1930s, before her overtly Jewish involvement kicked in, when she took to public forums to mobilize people to join the United Front against the rise of fascism.

"I'm the voice of the silent majority. The rest of them call me up and say, 'Esther Leah, I'm so proud of you.'" Does that make her mad? "Boiling!"



"People can't shop for a government"

Not so soft-spoken as Golda Meir, nor as flamboyant as Bella Abzug, but definitely in the same league is **Sophie Masloff**, former mayor of Pittsburgh (1986-1992). Sophie—like Golda and Bella, often called by her first name—was president of the city council when Pittsburgh's mayor died in office. She inherited the job, and two years later—then in her late 60s—was elected the first female and the first Jewish mayor in the history of predominantly Democratic Pittsburgh.

Mayor Masloff proved to a patriarchal city government that a woman could be a highly competent, tough-when-necessary mayor. But as a woman, she says, she also ran it the way it should be run—and usually is not: with a heart. "You cater to the people" she said recently, "[because] people can't shop for a government." And as a Jew—living in a Jewish neighborhood, sending her daughter to day school and contending with "ethnic remarks" throughout her career—"I tried to bring "Jewishkeit" into everything I did." (She also brought her sharp wit, for which she was invited as a guest on the talk shows of Pat Sajak and Johnny Carson.)

Sophie's father died when she was two years old, and she grew up in a struggling Romanian immigrant family of Orthodox background, headed by her resourceful mother who spoke no English. At 16, Sophie volunteered for the Democrats and went on to work in virtually every aspect of city government as she rose through the ranks of Pittsburgh's Democratic party.

In her busier than ever "retirement," Sophie belongs, by her own account, "to just about every Jewish organization" and the Democratic National Committee. (Whatever she is paid for speaking or an endorsement she gives to charity.) She has been invited to the White House by every Democratic administration during her career. Early in the Clinton era, Sophie received an unexpected phone call from President Clinton. He said, "This is Bill Clinton." Not about to be fooled, she said, "And I'm the Queen of Sheba." He said, "Well, maybe you are."

When Sophie speaks with pride of her own accomplishments, she quotes her role model Golda Meir who said, "Don't be so humble. You're not that great."

—Bonnie P. Theiner, teacher, counselor, writer and proud Pittsburg resident

What other people think of me is not my business"

Which brings me squarely to what is really the hugest leap that loudmouthed Jewish females make—not to be minimized—and that is: *our willingness to displease*. In therapeutic offices throughout America, females' inability to say "no" to others is their most deeply rooted handicap, breeding entire self-help sections in bookstores on the topics of co-dependency, assertiveness training, women's fear of their own anger, depression, female addictions, et cetera. There is little that is *more* heretical than a woman who dares to become the center of her own life.

Which is why someone like Bella Abzug is all the more remarkable. A model for how to displease people as a matter of principle, she was renowned for announcing preemptively, "Yeah, I'm a lightening rod. That's what I am. So, attack me." Bella would not compromise values that she deeply held, regardless of opinion polls or exasperated colleagues. In her book, *Bella*, she wrote, "I spend all day figuring out how to beat the machine and knock the crap out of the political power structure." Her description of how she came to retain her hat in D.C. is classic Bella. "When I got to Congress, they made a big thing over the hat," she said. "So I watched. Did they want me to wear it or not? They didn't want me to wear it, so I did."

A LILITH reader who e-mailed us in response to our loudmouths call identified the single factor that she feels has *most* allowed her to be a force for positive change in the world, as well as to be true to herself. "Frankly," she writes, "I really don't care how liked or disliked I am. I learned long ago that what other people think of me is not my business."

"Is a nose with a deviation such a crime against the nation?"

Another loudmouth tactic, correlative to the willingness to antagonize people if they get in the way of a higher good, is an ability to play the game of "chicken"—without getting an ulcer. In my first year of rabbinical school, a female classmate of mine, who was *not* doing much academic work, was told she had to withdraw from the seminary. In response to this, she simply continued to show up, day after day, taking up as much space as possible at the classroom table with her breakfast, snack, lunch, fruit, sodas, gum, books, stacks of mail, and imposing self. She won, and has been a rabbi for many years.

Playing "chicken" (which a male friend of mine asserts most men play as their birthright) means you are willing to fight longer, louder, bigger, crazier, more relentlessly and more unwaveringly than your opponent—whether that person is a boor on a subway or the administrator of your seminary.

In an idiosyncratic little children's book, *Positively No Pets Allowed*, by Nathan Zimelman, the protagonist, Mrs. Goldberg, buys her son Seymour a pet gorilla, names him Irving, and then walks back towards their apartment house. On the way, the iceman calls out to her. "Lady, I know maybe a thousand landlords, and not one of them will let in a pet." Mrs. Goldberg pooh-poohs him. "Who says a gorilla is a pet?" she answers. "A gorilla is a visitor." The final frame shows Mrs. Goldberg, in haute I-don't-care-what-you-think attire (beret, goofy fur-collared coat, shleppy pocketbook and orthopedic shoes) ushering herself,

Seymour, and Irving past the landlord and into their brownstone apartment building. A huge brass plaque on the door reads: "Positively no pets allowed."

On stage and screen, Barbra Streisand is an ace chicken-player, defiantly shoving her aggressively ethnic face in front of the camera and *daring* viewers to reject her. Her characters are loud, smart, female and Jewish, refusing to submit to either the cultural tyranny of sexism *or* assimilation. The nervy lyric in "If a Girl Isn't Pretty" ("Is a nose with deviation such a crime against the nation?") invites the audience to conspire *with* her in the thrill of *chutpahdik* norm-breaking.

Since most women's self-esteem depends on the approval of others, ignoring all that can be a complete high. The popular poem by Jenny Joseph which begins, "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple," is all about this rush. Joseph's character pledges to "press alarm bells" and "learn to spit." Ruth Harriet Jacobs, a well-known gerontologist and Big Mouth, is famous for her Gray Panther-type campaign (the original of which was started by another Jewish loudmouth, Maggie Kuhn) which she calls, "Be an OUTRAGEOUS Older Woman."

"Your ability to be moderate is pretty much shot"

The enormous will that it takes for a woman to get to the other side of culturally prescribed captivities leaves many big mouths deficient in the "brakes" department. Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, like Abzug, describes falling into a looking-glass universe where suddenly you're "in everyone's face." A lesbian friend of mine wears a T-shirt that says "Loud Pushy Jew Dyke." She explains. "First I saw the 'Jew' T-shirt in a store in lower Manhattan and I bought it, then I saw the 'Loud Pushy Jew' T-shirt and bought that, and so on. Once you start down this extremely brazen path, especially as a lesbian, there is no turning back. I mean, you've breached boundaries, you've broken all the rules, you've disappointed people you love. Your ability to be moderate, at that point, is pretty much shot."

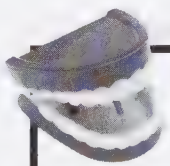
A 1972 report by Ralph Nader estimated that if Bella sponsored a bill, that would cost the bill 20 to 30 votes. Bella's allies and supporters often pleaded with her to chill in the interests of the cause. But asking Bella, and other modern-day prophet types, to modulate their big mouths is, in a psychological sense, like demanding that someone be able to breathe both on land and in water. Becoming a Big Mouth often involves walking straight into the jaws of traumatic experience, of chronic rejection, and people who survive come out the other side different from John Tierney or me.

"So what's the worst thing that could happen?"

If you wish to join the ranks of the mouthily endowed, you must be *fine* about your imperfections. This is truly an act of female defiance, as one of the most powerful ways that we women are silenced is through being ridiculed for our flaws.

Bella, despite her ferocity and intensity, was known for the ease with which she admitted mistakes, made mid-course corrections, listened and changed her mind. And comic Sandra Bernhard sees her commitment to the art of "correcting and adjusting" as being the prerequisite that frees her up to risk her transgressive public thing.

Several women who responded to our LILITH call attributed their ability to be Big Mouths in the world to having learned to challenge



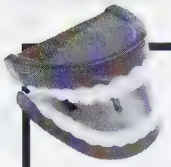
'I am who I am'

"Since I can remember, I have been told that I have the biggest mouth in the universe. In fact, I am famous for scaring people away! And when I get angry, watch out! I am totally honest, always tell the truth, and I never waste my time with chit-chat. I am one of those people that you either immediately like or dislike from the moment you meet me. . . .

"I think I am fair, honest, moral, loyal, highly ethical and I refuse to compromise these values under any circumstances. . . .

"It is difficult to be my friend. I know that I can be embarrassing at times and I have very high standards and expectations. I speak my mind even if it is not the majority opinion. I have been ostracized for my big mouth and I have lost many friendships because of it. But I have also learned that I am who I am. Very few men are attracted to BIG-MOUTHED Jewish women and very few women can tolerate my passion. It can be lonely, although I am rarely alone."

—Received via e-mail from a 44-year-old single mother of two, on the subject of her own big mouth.



Big Mouth from birth?

If newborns could speak, artist **Beth Grossman** would have been an activist from birth. At the age of 6, hearing of children starving overseas, she mailed her dinner meat out in an envelope addressed "To the Children of Bangladesh." In fourth grade, she organized her first demonstration—to support her mother's fight against a highway development project—and made the TV news. And in eighth grade she was suspended for orchestrating a school walkout to attend a demonstration against the war in Vietnam.

"I have always been a person that speaks my mind," she reflects. "I do it with a Jewish sense of humor and by getting a community together."

Going on her theory that "behind every Jewish woman Big Mouth is another Big Mouth Jewish woman," community-building is at the center of Grossman's efforts today. As a leader of San Francisco's No Limits for Women in the Arts, a program of communal support for some 70 women artists, she teaches women how to encourage each other to have "big visions" and give one another "go-for-it attention." It is that community support that has sustained Grossman, and that helped her fulfill a dream of installing an exhibit by and about Jewish women at Ellis Island in 1996.

"I would have given up so early on," she says, explaining how, for her, being outspoken depends on receiving the type of support she elicited from her parents and teachers growing up. "They were all going, 'go-girl,' 'get back in the saddle.'"

Judith Serebrin, a No Limits artist, has learned from Grossman "that it is not only possible to live a big, meaningful, fulfilling, playful life as a Jewish woman artist, but that it is not necessary to give anything or anyone up in order to do it." Grossman returns the compliment: "Judy helps me keep track of the big picture and what's really important. And I must say what's really important about this Big Mouth story is our relationship."

Among Grossman's current projects is a battle to prevent developers from digging up a 5,000-year-old Native American burial grounds in San Francisco, very much like her mother fought the highway developers years before.

"Every time I go to the city council meetings" with son in tow, she says laughing, "I'm like, 'Am I my mom or what!?'"

Big Mouth meets the Law

My mother, **Ethel Kopelman**, born in 1897, was always a take-charge person. At 70, she dyed her hair blond to be the "life of the party"; she ghost-wrote fiery speeches that my father delivered at Zionist fund-raisers; and, during the Great Depression, she worked at three jobs—day and night—to keep the family solvent. But my favorite story about her as a *lebedikeh* (full-of-life) force of nature was the time she used her Big Mouth to get my father out of a speeding ticket.

He was tearing along when a cop pulled him over. My plump mother, without missing a beat, heaved her girth across my father, rolled down the window, and got to work. "Officer!" she ordered the policeman, "arrest this man! Give this man a ticket! Do you think he listens to me?? For the past hour I've been telling him, 'Joe, slow down! You're a danger to the human race!' But do you think he listens? I tell him, 'Joe, get out of the left lane! So, what, you're a teenage speed demon! Why do you persist in driving in the left-lane . . . .'" She ranted on, not letting the trooper squeeze a syllable in edgewise.

Eventually, the officer shook his head, rolled his eyes in henpecked sympathy with my poor father, and backed away to his police car, no ticket issued.

My father loved to recount this story; he was proud of, and amazed by, my funny, competent, fearless mother.

—Rebecca K. Stone

themselves routinely with one question: "What's the worst thing that could happen?" (LuAnne Strauss of San Diego writes, "I imagine the worst-case scenario which I then always realize I would survive. LuAnne, *what* is the big deal? At that point, there's no reason not to go for it.")

The flamboyant, warm-hearted, radically independent theater agent Flora Roberts, whose big-mouthed gravelly basso has been legendary on Broadway since the 1940's, remembers having the nerve, as a 20-year-old receptionist for a Broadway producer, to tell the famous Lillian Hellman (now *there's* a Jewish Big Mouth) exactly what was wrong with her new play. Roberts remembers saying to herself, wryly, before she opened her big mouth, "So what's the worst thing that can happen? You'll get another *receptionist* job." Hellman was so taken by the young, big-mouthed kindred spirit that she whirled around and shot off to Roberts' boss, "How much are you paying this girl? Give her a raise!'

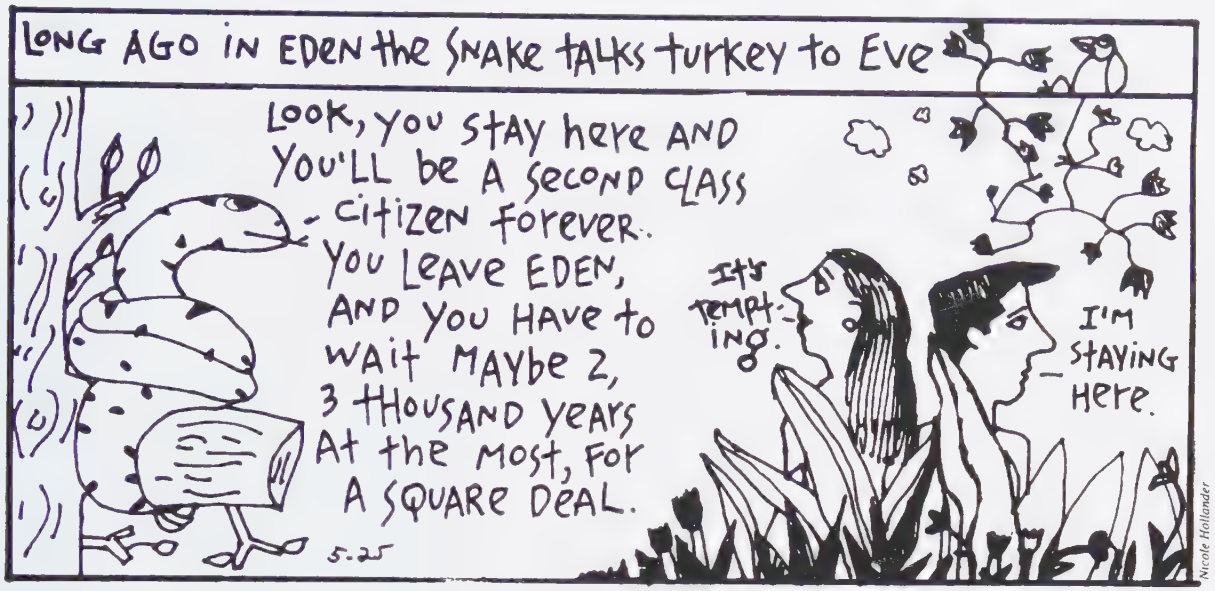
God's Big Mouth

Besides the Big Mouth issues that pertain to gender, there are also the general characteristics of our tribe: *Jews talk.* That's what we *do.* It is a little known fact that this is *why* the chosen people were chosen—because God is *also* a big talker. God talks from the very start of Genesis (in which God doesn't just *do* stuff; God has to *talk* about doing it—e.g., "God *said,* "Let there be light."), through those ridiculous Rube Goldberg-like Torah locutions that most Jews have in their bloodstream

MEET THE MATRIARCHS

ORIGINAL ARTICLES FROM LILITH

the independent Jewish women's magazine


LONG AGO IN EDEN the SNAKE talks turkey to EVE
LOOK, YOU STAY HERE AND YOU'LL be A SECOND CLASS - CITIZEN FOREVER. YOU LEAVE EDEN, AND YOU HAVE to WAIT MAYbe 2, 3 THOUSAND YEARS At the most, FOR A SQUARE DEAL.
5-25
It's TEMPTING.
I'M STAYING HERE.
Nicole Hollander

WO MONOLOGUES: ACHEL AND LEAH
y Zeise Wild Wolf
wo sisters, and their views on child-irth and men.

HE STRENGTH OF TAMAR
y Ingrid Hughes
Vhy Tamar took her own course.

ODOM: A BIBLICAL RETELLING
y Lori Ubell
low Lot offered his daughters to be aped.

UARDING THE GARDEN
y David Schechter
ilith, Eve, Adam, and God, in the gar-en.

OST LOVE, 1000 BCE
y Nehama Aschkenasy
deeper look into Michal's relationship ith David and Saul.

WHAT DINA THOUGHT
by Deena Metzger
Dina's story retold.

OUR FOURMOTHERS
by Elsa Nad
A collection of poetry.

AND VASHTI REFUSED: A GAY MAN FINDS A BIBLICAL ROLE MODEL
by Gary David Comstock
A Protestant man finds his role model in Vashti.

THE PASSION OF LILITH
by Pamela Hadas
A prose poem about Lilith, Adam's first wife.

MS. LOT
by Muriel Rukeyser
A short poem told by Lot's daughter.

BEATING PATRIARCHY AT ITS OWN GAME
by Mary Cahn Schwartz
The role of women in the family in Genesis.

LILITH SOURCES
by Judy Weinberg
Where to find Lilith: a list of texts .

SEEDS OF CONFLICT: SARAH AND HAGAR
by Marjorie Hirshan
Short fiction about Sarah and Hagar.

WE'LL NEVER READ THE BIBLE THE SAME WAY AGAIN
by Alicia Ostriker
A discussion on feminist commentaries, as well as three short interpretations on Eve, Noah, and Joshua.

© COPYRIGHT LILITH PUBLICATIONS, INC

❑ Please send me _____ copies of LILITH's Meet the Matriarchs reprint packets ($12 for each reprint packet).

❑ Please send me a one year subscription to LILITH, the independent Jewish women's quarterly ($18 for each subscription).

❑ I enclose a check, made payable to Lilith Publications, Inc..

❑ Charge my ❑ VISA ❑ Mastercard ❑ AMEX

card #_____exp.date_____

signature _____

name_____

address_____

city _____

state _____ zip _____

Mail payment to: LILITH, 250 West 57 Street, Suite 2432, New York, NY 10107 or fax (212) 757-5705 or e-mail your order with credit card information (lilithmag@aol.com).

MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY FUNDS GRANTED BY THE CHARLES H. REVSON FOUNDATION

(Hebrew or English) that *talk* about *talking* about *talking* (e.g., "And God *spoke* to Moses, *saying*, "*Speak* to the Hebrews and *tell* them...."), through the final, gorgeous *tikkun olam* challenge of Deuteronomy 30 in which God sums it all up, saying to the Hebrew people, What are you waiting for? The answer isn't in heaven. It's within YOU, "*in your mouth*, and in your heart and in your deed."

I find the sentiments of this latter passage completely inspiring, morally and politically. The passage also succinctly identifies the entire three-part activist credo of Jewish Big Mouths. That is, one pledges one's allegiance 1) to blabbing ("in your mouth"); 2) to being real ("in your heart"); 3) to putting one's money where one's mouth is ("in your deed"). You can trace a direct lineage, probably verifiable through DNA testing, from God to the prophet Isaiah to Bella Abzug.

Andrew Vogel Ettin, in his very talky, free-associative book, *Speaking Silences: Stillness and Voice in Modern Jewish Tradition*, describes Jews as noisy generations of "professional and amateur storytellers, neighbors, homilists, poets, disputants, activists, cantors, shoppers, scholars, orators, actors, translators, legal authorities, prophets and tradespeople," who have neither "anxiety about speech" nor "attraction to stillness."

Ashkenazi talking, of course, substituted for *everything*—most notably money, power, security and food. (Ettin points out that Jewish speech, perfected into a weapon in Eastern European *shtetlach*, and rap music, perfected into a weapon in inner-city *shtetlach,* share an etiology.)

Anzia, Muriel and Adrienne

Scores of big-mouthed Jewish female writers, over generations, have identified that ironic, painful place where the shadow falls: between the Jewish injunction to talk, and the female injunction *not* to. The immigrant writer Anzia Yezierska put it, "As one of the dumb, voiceless ones I speak." Muriel Rukeyser penned the now-famous line, "What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life?/The world would split open." And Adrienne Rich (who will undoubtedly be beatified by Jewish women some day as an especially worthy big-mouthed prophet), in *The Dream of a Common Language*, wrote of a friend—herself—who drowns in her own silence, "fear wound round her throat/and choking her like hair. And this is she," Rich laments, "with whom I tried to speak."

Lately, the presses are rolling out a stunning number of steely, empowered, feminist-Jewish books, one after another, and Alice Bach's brainy *Women, Seduction, and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative* is, with the others, at the head of the class. Bach has the distinction of being a loudmouth's loudmouth. She presses the female-friendly Bible reader to risk being "consigned to the ranks of the disloyal," by refusing to align herself with the Scriptural "narratorial 'we'"—which is only, Bach reminds us, after all, an ideological old-boys' network *pretending* to be God. (A *colossal* game of "chicken.")

Readers forget, says Bach, that the authors of the Bible are simply telling *their* version of things. The rhetorical device of the omniscient narrator—which we all learned about when reading Thornton Wilder in the eighth grade—is used to recurrent demagogic effect in these male-driven plots that we call Bible. It's time, Bach says, to "challenge the privileged role of the biblical narrator," and to call him what he really is: "the fictive henchman of the author."

Bach urges all feminists to pull aside the curtain on these biblical wizards of Oz, and to begin, like Muriel Rukeyser, telling the truth: daring to silence those patriarchal narrative Kansans who, for millennia,

It's scary to be a Big Mouth-in-training.

In 1946, Fanchon Shur ran away from home. "I put my coat on and walked about 5 miles to my 36-year-old syster Sylvia's house. I sat on her dark back door step, knocking too quietly to be heard, waiting for over three hours there, fearing that she would turn me away."

Peace activist and poet **Sylvia Major**, 25 years her senior, didn't shut her out. Major, now 88 and physically frail, since the 1930s had been a social activist on behalf of world peace, ecology, civil liberties and civil rights. She fought the re-Nazification of Germany after World War II, opposed nuclear testing, protested McCarthy-era persecutions, helped her son take his fight for conscientious-objector status during the Vietnam War to the Supreme Court. "It was the impelling spark of my life to bring peace to the world," she told LILITH, adding that her role models were found in the books of the prophets her father read to her at age four. "I was born to *tikkun*."

Major also became the primary "influence on my outspokenness," Fanchon Shur reflects, recalling the books her sister gave her to read on the history of the labor movement, apartheid and slavery. "I went back to school and I was nine years old," Shur told LILITH, "and I said to my class, 'Our book is lying. There are no 'blackies' sitting around with guitars.'"

Such outspokenness, however, had its darker side too. According to Shur, "Sylvia would watch over the family in a good, sweet loving way, but also be a warrior for people to do things [her] way." That meant speaking out for what you believed in, even if your were, like Shur, a frightened nine-year-old child. "If she had said to me, 'Fanchon, I know this is terrifying to you, and it's okay if you just think it and don't say it. . . .' But she never said that."

have silenced us. Honest people, says Bach, need to step up to the podium for real, letting the millennial world know that the 5759-year-old filibuster is up. As contemporary Jewish-feminist writers like Esther Broner, Sandy Sasso, Alicia Ostriker, Ellen Frankel and Ellen Galford (to name only a few) are saying, "Okay. Now we're telling the story. Sit. Enjoy."

"Sleep with me!" ("Shikvah Immi!")

For a little illustration of what constitutes, biblically speaking, an "acceptable" female Big Mouth versus a "strange" one, Proverbs (chapters 7, 8 and 9) provides an offensive, compact, shop-and-go example of females freeze-dried conveniently into theological dualism. The very famous "strange woman" (*"ishah zarah"*) is "riotous and rebellious," she ***"seduces with words,"*** and she runs amok, "now in the streets, now in the broad places." Her house, where she ***"maketh smooth her words"*** is "on the way to the netherworld." (I *love* that.) She is Lilith, Delilah, Vashti—a woman whom the writers *pretend* to vilify because she likes sex; but really this vilification serves a higher purpose: to intimidate women from assuming *any* personal authority whatsoever. (The latter being the deep headache.)

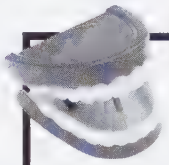
The "good woman" is, interestingly, a big talker, too, but she ***"speaks excellent things,"*** her ***"mouth utters truth," "the opening of [her] lips [is] right things."*** She is a chaste stay-at-home, thus omphalically, writes Alice Bach, "not threatening the stability of the society that depends on her compliance." Wonderfully bold, Bach blabs the forbidden yet obvious: Where does the *ishah zarah* reside? Only in "the male imagination."

So, truly, how are thoughtful, fair-minded people supposed to proceed, stuck with such a tragically flawed canon? Advises Bach, "We must transport characters to a place where women are not thought strange for acknowledging their sexual desire"—or for GETTING A LIFE. "The mind of a feminist reader," concludes Bach, "is such a place."

Finally, for big-mouthed gals who use their maws not only for talking, but also for singing and noisy orgasms, there is one hidden feminist infiltration in the Torah that only (shhh!) LILITH subscribers know about. (To become a LILITH subscriber….) It is in Genesis 39, where Potiphar's wife (Lauren Bacall) issues the shortest seduction line in the Bible—just two smoky words, *"Shikvah immi!"* ("Lie with me!") It's a sexy line, with just enough of that promising dominatrix zing. The puzzlement for commentators has been the Masoretic cantillation mark (a *shalshelet*) over the following word, a mark that is extremely rare and that connotes a weird sound—a kind of prolonged, intense, upbeat, ambiguous ululation. It is Potiphar's wife's orgasm, planted there nearly 2,000 years ago by feminists who, alas, lived before their time.

And finally, the truth about J.A.P.s

The final and most serious thing I want to say here has to do with loudmouthed Jewish women being called "J.A.P.s." or, disparagingly, "Jewish Mothers." It occurred to me, in thinking through and writing this article, that these derogatory labels not only silence us (because we fear being ridiculed), and confuse us (are we empty-headed and materialistic, overbearing and intrusive?), but, more to the poisonous point, they serve to completely erase who we really are. *That* is their noxious, underlying purpose.



Is a Big Mouth ever <u>too</u> Big?

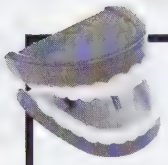
"A lot of people say if I was a man I would be a hero, but I'm a woman so I'm a bitch," charges **Judge Fran Fine**, whose "fabulous Jewish mouth" was brought to our attention by her friend Sandy Pittle. "She's a very big force in helping women in Las Vegas," Pittle said, "even though the male lawyers don't like it."

Presiding over Las Vegas' Family Court, Fine hears cases of families "who are in crisis." She takes calls from battered women day and night; they know she can lend a sympathetic ear and a powerful hand in taking them out of harm's way.

Quoting the ascerbic, hard-talking TV judge Judy Sheindlin—"Don't pee on my leg and tell me it's raining"—Fine has earned herself an aggressive reputation. She says she's tough on lawyers and tough on litigants "who try to bull me." She was even tough on her Dad, who was giving in to emphysema when she told him, "'If you're not going to make an effort, I'm not going to hang around.'" (Her father got himself out of bed and threw himself into helping her get elected as Family Court judge. Fine won the 1992 campaign, and her Dad lived two more years.)

Nominator Pittle—a rocket scientist who couldn't get a job when she graduated in the 1960s because "they wouldn't hire a woman anywhere that had to do with rockets"—wrote that Fine "is an inspiration to me at a time in my life when I really need one." (Now in her 60s, Pittle is looking toward medical school, or at least to follow in her father's footsteps as a 911 emergency technician.)

But toughness goes both ways. Fine has been charged with ethics violations for conversations she had with participants in cases pending before her. The accusing attorney said she "lacks the ability to exercise the judicial discretion and temperament" necessary. Fine denies any misconduct and claims the charges are simply pre-election shenanigans from lawyers who don't like her style.



Out there for Israel

The *Intifada* was just beginning when **Andrea Levin**, director of CAMERA: Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America, decided to fight for Israel—not with bullets or bayonets, but with words. Public relations is her battlefield. At a time in the 1980s when media images of Israeli soldiers shooting at unarmed Palestinian youths were ubiquitous, The Boston Globe, charges Levin, "was so outrageous that it was just painful every day to read it."

A Bostonian just out of graduate school in public policy at the time, she decided to take on the daily newspaper with an ad campaign—"Why does the Boston Globe distort the news about Israel?"—to run in regional Jewish and secular papers.

It wasn't popular to ask American Jews "to participate in the effort of defending Israel's good name" at a time when the world body of the United Nations still condemned Zionism as racism. And there were no other watchdog groups that were actively—vocally—monitoring the press on Israel. "That was a little hairy," she recalls about the eve of the first advertisement. "I remember feeling a little cold: What were people going to think?"

A decade later, taking out ads against such shibboleths as National Public Radio and CNN for their coverage of Israel, Levin remains firm both in her conservative politics and in her belief that her public relations war against the American press is something the American Jewish community—ultimately—appreciates.

If someone were to have taken a poll about the Boston Globe ads, she asks, "would everyone have said 'great!'? They would not. But once you succeed, then you have people saying, 'Oh, it's good that you did that.' . . . You can't let Israel be defamed. The risks [I take] are an outgrowth of a sense of indignation, and then one does what one has to do."

Appetites: Big Mouth, Big Sex

When I think Big Mouth, I think Sophie Tucker, one of the early "mothers" of a long line of Jewish women Big Mouths on stage. In helping to create an American cabaret night life, she made loudness, power and sex synonymous by the 1920s. Her enormous voice, in the same tradition as great African-American women blues singers, crooned about wanting sex from her man—a deeply scandalous message that, more than once, got her arrested. Tucker also dared to lampoon the traditional roles of women and men, as well as the sanctity of marriage.

Tucker was part of a generation of "outsiders" who, for the first time, were flocking to cities, either as a result of the Great Migration or of immigration to America. Jews and African-Americans were creating something entirely new: a hot, jazzy urban culture. They toppled Victorian turn-of-the-century norms about propriety and the denial of pleasure. Female entertainers like Tucker asserted, through their bold presence on stage, that women have appetites, that they can risk taking public roles. They can sing about who they are, what they want, and how they will not be controlled by any man. But Tucker's loud mouth also, remarkably, sang about something very different. "My Yiddishe Mama"—her signature song—became, for generations of Americans, the embodiment of longing for the lost Old Country, symbolized by devoted Jewish motherhood. As Jewish "outsider," Tucker expressed both scorn for what seemed to her to be the "emptiness" of propriety, as well as complicated bereavement towards a world to which the "outsiders" would never return.

Tucker's big mouth shouted out her right, as an American Jewish female, to be heard—no matter what she said. A long line of great entertainers—Fanny Brice, Totie Fields, Joan Rivers, Bette Midler and many others—are her descendants. They are all-star "transgressors" who contributed to redefining American culture.

—Riv-Ellen Prell,
anthropology professor, University of Minnesota

Big Mouths are indeed the *opposite* of shallow, self-involved, whiny, immature, vicarious-living, materialistic, enmeshed, or suffocating. We are "contenders" who dare to live life on our own terms. We are authoritative, competent and empathic. We move the agendas on significant political and social issues. We comprise some of the advance-troops of the Messiah, prophets with a mission of *tikkun olam*—either on a courageous, grassroots level (like the 92-year-old Miriam Seigel), or on a policy-making, human rights level (like Bella Abzug).We practice in-your-face radical compassion. Our concerns are anything *but* meaningless; they are expressions of a deeply felt engagement with the world—in the most traditional, moral, political, and religious sense.

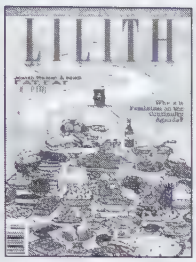
Of course, to those impaired by patriarchy, this is exactly what's so threatening about us. First, our "engagement" with the world means we're not (safely) incapacitated through depression, disconnection, alienation or

Help us clean out our closet!

Fill the gaps in your personal LILITH magazine collection

(Order any 3 back issues of LILITH and we'll send you a fourth FREE!)

Winter 1996 (#53)
- Jewish Feminist Scholarship
- Healing—A Special Section: Disability Becomes Understanding, Resentment Becomes Love
- What's Your Name?



Summer 1995 (#47)
- Jewish Women & Food: EAT, EAT. (Diet! Diet!) What Makes Us Different?
- Identity and Anxiety: Feminism and Jewish Continuity

Fall 1992 (#37)
- Yaffa Eliach's Portraits from Pre-War Poland
- Lesbian Wedding: Reconciliations Under an Unusual Chuppah
- Jewish Feminist Politicians Tell What Shaped Them

Fall 1996 (#52)
- A Modern Idenity Crisis: Black or Jewish?
- 20th Anniversary Poster
- Feminists Examine Jewish Children's Books

Fall 1994 (#44)
LILITH's Famous 18th Anniversary Issue!
- Notable Jewish Feminists Tell How They Got to Be This Way
- Young Women to Watch During the Next 18 years
- Bat Mitzvah in Boomer Families

Spring 1989 (#23)
- Jewish Families *Are* Different! Here, Some Reasons Why
- 18 Campuses–What They're Really Like
- Etty Hillesum: From Amsterdam to Auschwitz

Summer 1996 (#51)
- Making Space Sacred
- Fiction: Three Special Stories About Love & Loss—and Men Who Inspire Both
- Medieval Women Had to Choose: Sex or Scholarship?

Summer 1994 (#43)
- INmarriage: The New Minority—Jews Who Choose Jews!
- Counselor Alert! Amazing Programming for Summer Camp
- Jewish Women's Faces around the World: Photographs by Joan Roth

Winter 1989 (#22)
- When a Feminist Therapist Confronts Her Own Jewish Identity
- Women's Mideast Peace Efforts
- Our Radical Jewish Foremothers and How They Changed America

Spring 1996 #(50)
- A New Jewish Population Statistic: Single Mothers—by Choice !
- Abortion—Fiction, Fact and Political Bedfellows
- Teen Girl Angst in the 1950's, 60's, 80's and Today

Fall 1993 (#41)
- Feminist Philanthropy: Women Changing the World with Their Dollars
- Goddess Cults and Jewish Women
- Palestinian Women Who Are Making Peace

Summer 1986 (#15)
- Why Are Jewish Women More Vulnerable to Rape?
- My Children Are Disappeared—An Argentine Mother's Nightmare
- A Woman Rabbi Reclaims Mikveh

Winter 1995 (#49)
- Gender-Bending in Yiddish Film
- The Current Explosion of Jewish Women's Music
- A New Blessing for Your Wedding

Spring 1993 (#39)
- Gentiles and Jews at the Hop: Why High School Reunions Trigger Such a Tingle
- Out of Africa: An Ethiopian Jewish Woman's Exodus
- Gender Politics at Summer Camp

Fall/Winter 1985/6 (#14)
- Annie Oakley's Pals: How the Wild West Liberated Jewish Women
- Breaking the Male Monopoly of Jewish Community Leadership
- The First Conservative Woman Rabbi

BACK ISSUES:

☐ #53 ☐ #47 ☐ #37

☐ #52 ☐ #44 ☐ #23

☐ #51 ☐ #43 ☐ #22

☐ #50 ☐ #41 ☐ #15

☐ #49 ☐ #39 ☐ #14

Terrific! Please send me all the issues I have checked at left.
(I understand that when I order any 3 back issues I receive a fourth back issue FREE.)

I want_____magazines @ $4 each.

Total payment of $_____

☐ My check is enclosed.

☐ Please charge my ____AMEX ____ MC ____VISA

#_____

Expiration date_____

Signature_____

My name_____

Address_____

_____

Please mail this form to:
LILITH, 250 W. 57th Street, #2432, New York, NY 10107-0172, or fax (212)757-5705, or send e-mail to lilithmag@aol.com with your credit card information. You can also place a telephone order toll free with a credit card: (888) 2-LILITH (545484).

Thanks for helping us CLEAN OUT THE CLOSET!

shopping. Others envy us our capacity to engage, because much of America struggles with feeling alone, empty, disconnected. Many men depend anaclitically on females to give them this sense of "connected" well-being (shhh; this is a big secret). Yet Big Mouths are pretty self-actualized; we've dared to become whole human beings. We don't depend on others to make us feel attached, committed or empowered. We just *are*.

Second, our "caretaking" out there in the world suggests that there might not be enough of us "as resource" to go around. Who's going to take care of *the men*? Who's going to collude with them in pretending that they have no dependency needs? Who is going to keep their awful sense of helplessness at bay if the truth about their needs, indeed, gets out? I feel sympathy with males in this culture; in certain ways, their narrowly defined roles are even more handicapping, prescriptive and Procrustean than women's.

Big Mouths like us scare the underpants off of brilliant writers like Philip Roth, Norman Mailer, Bruce Jay Friedman, or Herman Wouk (to name but a few of the Jewish men who have so successfully created the ineradicable stereotypes of "J.A.P." and "Jewish Mother"). Norman Mailer's narcissistic acting out has always advertised his embarrassing need to keep at bay his consciousness of himself as a helpless sad sack. He dismissed Bella by calling her, wonderfully, reductively, the "voice that could boil the fat off a taxicab driver's neck."

As we know, Bella Abzug was not just an empty gragger; she was a woman of extraordinary substance. On her very first day in the House, for example, she called for the withdrawal of all troops from Vietnam. (She also called for the first resolution for Nixon's impeachment, for the first federal gay civil rights bill, and for the first bill to decriminalize marijuana.) After three terms in Congress, Bella was voted by her colleagues (in a *U.S. News & World Report* poll) the third most influential member of Congress. As it says in Proverbs 31, "A Big Mouth who can find? For she gives precious, beautiful gifts to this planet: a wider, redemptive vision of what we, and the world, might be."

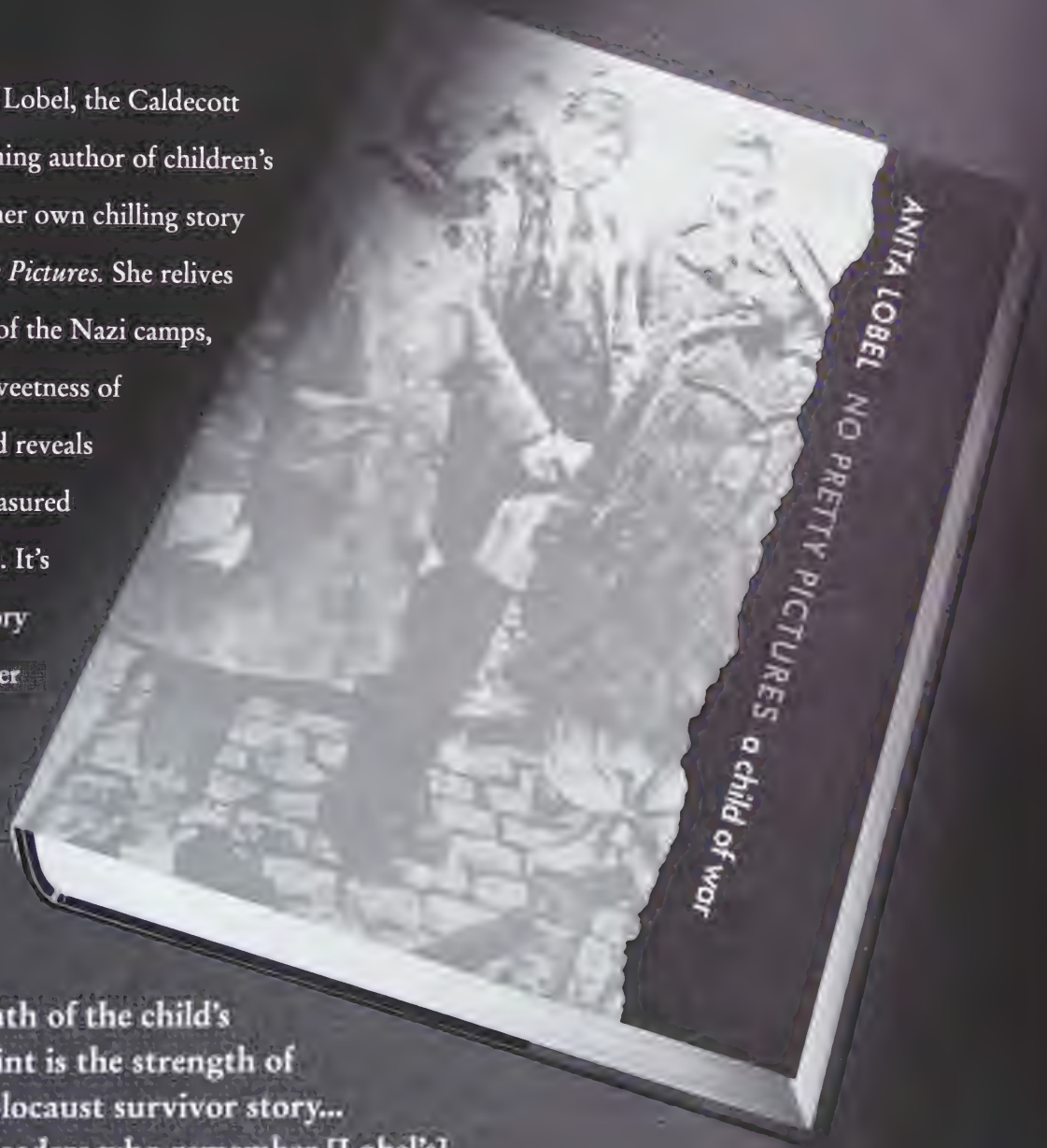
In her eponymous book, Bella wrote, "I've been described as a tough and noisy woman, a prizefighter, a man hater, you name it. They call me Battling Bella, Mother Courage, and a Jewish mother with more complaints than Portnoy. There are those who say I'm impatient, impetuous, uppity, rude, profane, brash and overbearing. Whether I'm any of these things or all of them, you can decide for yourself. But whatever I am—and this ought to be made very clear at the outset—I am a very serious woman." ■

I am a very serious woman.
—Bella Abzug

BELLA ABZUG AND GLORIA STEINEM. PHOTO BY JENNIFER WARBURTON

Imprisoned by the Nazis... freed by her art

Now, Anita Lobel, the Caldecott Honor-winning author of children's books tells her own chilling story in *No Pretty Pictures.* She relives the horrors of the Nazi camps, shares the sweetness of freedom, and reveals her most treasured photographs. It's truly one story you will never forget.



★ **"The truth of the child's viewpoint is the strength of this Holocaust survivor story... Older readers who remember [Lobel's] picture books will be stirred by her story."**
—ALA *Booklist* (starred review)

Ages 10 up. 208 pp. RTE $16.00/0-688-15935-4

Greenwillow Books
A division of William Morrow & Co., Inc.
1350 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019
www.williammorrow.com

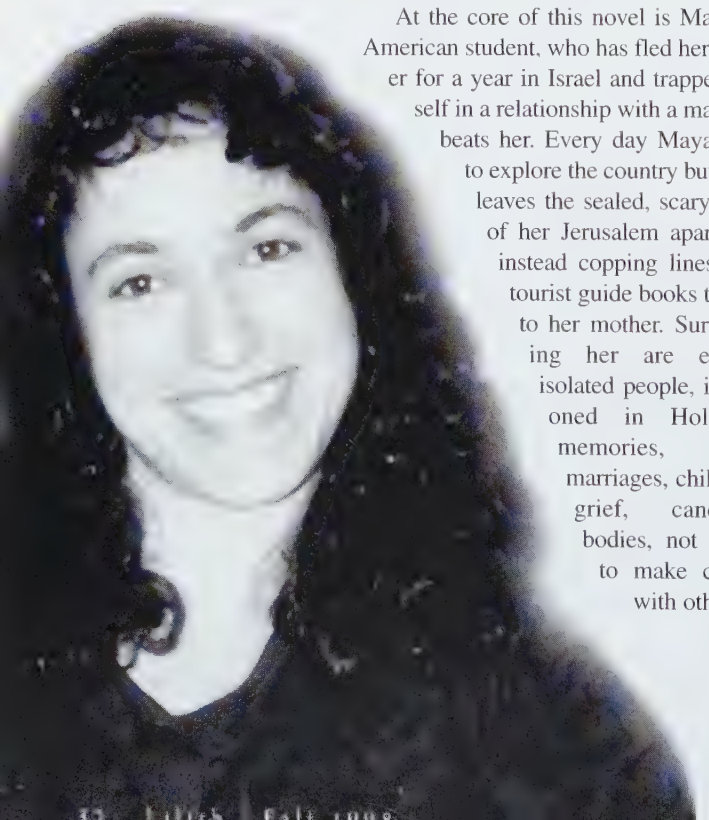
Fresh Voices

LILITH interviews four exciting young first-time novelists

The first line of **Rachel Kadish**'s first novel was written to settle a score. A man in her writing workshop was putting gratuitous sex into everything he wrote and criticizing everyone else for not doing the same.

"I decided," says an amused Kadish, 29, "that I was going to put sex in the first sentence and have it *mean* something." Intending to get rid of it later, she tapped out: "Long after the war was over they made love in the sealed room, she on top of him and he with his hands pressed in the flesh of her hips, and no missiles hurtling through the night sky any longer." Far from being expendable, that sentence turned out to hold the key—and the title—of her first novel.

True to its first line, ***From a Sealed Room***, due out from G. P. Putnam's Sons in October, is the story of complex human contact in Israel, where love and sex become deeply entwined with violence and fear. The sealed room is the space in each household that is hermetically closed off against chemical or biological attack. It is a place where all of Kadish's frightened characters feel safe, but also a place where they lock themselves in dangerous isolation. "What kind of love can you have in a sealed room?" asks one romantic character, alerting us to the central challenge of the book. "Feh. That would be no kind of love."



At the core of this novel is Maya, an American student, who has fled her mother for a year in Israel and trapped herself in a relationship with a man who beats her. Every day Maya vows to explore the country but never leaves the sealed, scary space of her Jerusalem apartment, instead copping lines from tourist guide books to send to her mother. Surrounding her are equally isolated people, imprisoned in Holocaust memories, angry marriages, childhood grief, cancerous bodies, not daring to make contact with others.

The shadow of danger and death that hangs over Israel encourages this sense of personal isolation, she says. Kadish's characters are silenced and sentenced by a stoical culture that would rather they keep their grief to themselves. "It's no secret," Kadish admits. "I'm pretty left-wing in terms of Israeli politics. . . . Violence in that loving relationship can be a metaphor for what goes on in Israel, where people can love every rock and tree and still commit violence."

Kadish lived in Israel (after a year internship at Lilith) and has worked for public awareness of domestic abuse. But while she acknowledges the feminist and Zionist elements in her book, during the writing she hung a sign above her computer: "It's a novel, not a statement."

"I figured the politics would emerge through the characters' actions, not the other way around. It's a book about women's silences, women trying to find their voices. They have to stop lying to themselves, they have to stop pretending to themselves that everything's okay when it's not, they have to start speaking to each other." —*Sarah Blustain*

"I never wanted to write a best-seller or tempt my readers," asserts Israeli writer **Ronit Matalon**, whose novel, ***The One Facing Us*** (translated by Marsha Weinstein, Metropolitan Books, $25), is as tempting and satisfying as a cool drink in the Negev desert.

True, this expertly translated novel "isn't a nice story," as Matalon puts it. It's about Esther, a bright, willful 17-year-old Israeli girl sent to live with her uncle in Cameroon for a bit of straightening out. Its stinging prose,

which leaps across time periods and far-flung locales at the flip of a paragraph, penetrates the skin and touches raw nerves.

Based loosely—she won't say *how* loosely—on her own family history, Matalon, a 39-year-old photojournalist-turned-novelist, chronicles the traumatic dispersal of an Egyptian Jewish family whose sons and daughters search for a place to call home in Israel, Africa and New York during the 1950s.

Uncle Sicourelle has spent 30 years in Africa dodging coups and his own memories; Uncle Moise, a kibbutznik, orders the family not to sit *shiva* when the family matriarch dies; Edouard, the youngest sibling, terrorizes Arabs in his role as head of Israeli security; Marcelle traipses the world in search of . . . something; and Esther's mother, Ines, continues to love and hate the husband who abandoned her many years before. Weaving through them all is Esther—a prickly, rebellious, walking contradiction, skeptical one minute and fiercely idealistic the next.

"I'm very interested in the 17-year-old girl because she is open to the world yet very judgemental," says Matalon. "She is occupied with moral problems, problems with identity and who she is. Esther is arrogant yet fragile, and above all she's full of curiosity. I like her a lot."

A first-generation Israeli, Matalon says that her family's immigrant experience compelled her to write her novel. "I had to do it. The generation of my parents doesn't really have its own voice and I had to give it its own voice."

Matalon's first adult novel (she's written two for children), which was warmly received in Israel, also gives voice to Matalon's baby-boomer generation, a generation that is reexamining its Jewish and Zionist identities.

"Ten years ago the atmosphere in Israel wasn't ready to receive this book," she believes. Noting that only a small portion of the action takes place in Israel, she adds, "it's a post-Zionist book where Israel isn't the only solution for the Jews." Israel, she adds, "is not the center of the book and it is not the center of the world."

—Michele Chabin

"I have Europe on the brain, unabashedly," says novelist **Martha Cooley**, ordering nothing but tea in a hip Park Slope coffee shop near her Brooklyn home. For her childhood self, that meant dreaming of well-tended farms and castles in the clouds. From her grandparents she heard "all these marvelous tales about Europe, and I thought, as a child, that's where I had to go and be."

Later, "Europe on the brain" also meant an attraction to "something else that has its mythological components—and that's Jewish intellectual life in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s," the 41-year-old Cooley explains, recalling her "philosemitic phase." "That's not to say that there weren't also exciting Catholic intellectuals or Protestant intellectuals, but the Jewish kind seemed kind of crazy and exciting, and there was a fervent quality to it that I, coming from this slightly held-in-check WASP family, really responded to."

It is directly out of the dialogue between Jewish passion and Christian coolness that Cooley's sophisticated new first novel, ***The Archivist*** (Little Brown & Company, $22.95) was born. In the book—which is also to be published in Brazil, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Germany—a reserved archivist named Matt comes head-to-head with a frenzied graduate student, Roberta, who has just discovered that her parents are Jewish and survived the Nazis hidden in a church. Roberta is trying to understand her parents' conversion to Christianity by prying into a closed archives of letters that records T.S. Eliot's conversion to Catholicism, his institutionalization of his wife, his frigid love of another woman, his overriding sense of shame. Joining in this battle of wills are the ghosts of a host of characters whose stories have paralleled Eliot's in many ways, and whose internal tug-of-wars pulled them between comfortable Christianity and a Jewish affiliation that inevitably threatened to—and sometimes succeeded in—driving them over the edge.

Though Cooley remains fairly aloof as she speaks, the mantle of the blue-blood WASP does not sit comfortably on her shoulders. She scorns the "wealthy horse country" where she grew up, the "scions of American capitalism—all WASPS" who surrounded her, and the whispers in which they used to say, "that person is Jewish." She left her mother's church at 16—"I just turned about and never turned back." She admires the "Old Testament God, who is a lover who screams and yells and acts kind of like an asshole sometimes. It's a very believeable, very humanized God, and that to me is the only God worth talking about." (This she says in a

humor so dry she will not betray it with a smile.) And yet at the same time, like so many of her conflicted characters, she finds she runs up emotionally against a wall of difference when she tries to dive in to Jewish culture and practice.

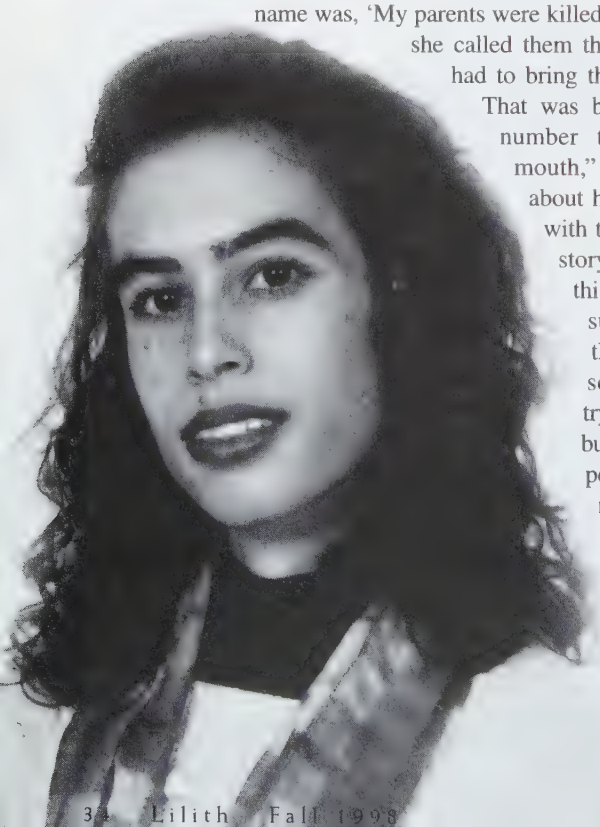
"I'm a WASP; I can't do that," she explains, treading, as she says, "dangerously close to cultural stereotypes." Tread, however, she does. "What would feel to my Jewish friends or to my ex-husband comforting would feel somwhat ensnaring to me. I would feel like, 'Can I go out and breathe now?'"

—SB

"I'm not interested in writing my own story," 25-year-old writer **Marissa Kantor Stark** says bluntly on the eve of the publication of her first novel, told entirely in the voice of a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor. It is also nearly the eve of Stark's marriage and she's sitting calmly in the lobby of her new residence on Manhattan's Upper West Side, waiting for mattresses and chairs to be delivered. Her mother—taking over personal matters—minds the parking meter and manages the movers, and it is clear that Stark isn't interested in telling her personal story any more than she is in writing it.

Stark's short book, ***Bring Us the Old People*** (Coffee House Press, $22.95), is based loosely on the story of an elderly woman whom Stark began visiting while an undergraduate at Princeton University. Though the woman was then confined to a nursing home, her mental life revolved around her war-time experience in rural Poland of delivering her parents, the "old people" of Stark's title, to the Nazis. Stark's book, with utter grace, limns the deterioration of the narrator's connection to the present even as this historic event becomes more real.

"The first thing she told me almost after she told me her name was, 'My parents were killed by the Hitlers'—she called them the Hitlers—'and I had to bring them to be killed.' That was basically sentence number two out of her mouth," Stark explains about her first encounter with the woman whose story would suggest this novel. "[It was] such a powerful thing to me that somebody would try to relieve that burden of guilt to a perfect stranger the minute they met them, that *that* would be the thing to say. Not, 'What's your name? Where do you go to school?' but 'I killed my parents.'"



The precocious Stark began her writing career as a high school student in her modern Orthodox community when a play she wrote about a child traveling through a dictionary was produced at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and on National Public Radio. At Princeton, writer Russell Banks immediately seized on this novel—her dissertation project—as prime for publication. Stark's second book, the subject of which she will not disclose, is based on a young woman whom the writer knew and whom "I feel I have access to."

"I see myself as going through life and meeting so many different people and once in a while just really clicking with somebody and becoming almost a vessel for telling that person's story in my own way," says Stark about her creative method of choice. "That's what makes me write, I think. If I were trapped inside myself all the time, I wouldn't have much to say."

—SB

More Newcomers of Note:

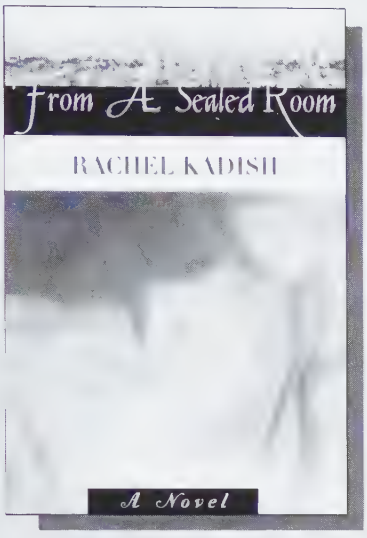
Bubbeh (Latin American Literary Review Press, $12.95): with which Mexican screenwriter and director **Sabina Berman** makes her English-language debut. Set in Mexico City of the 1960s, her novella peers into the interwoven, neurotic lives of three generations of Jewish women. Includes a terrifically funny child's-eye view of psychotherapy.

Love Ruins Everything: A Novel (Press Gang Publishers, $14.95): in which **Karen X. Tulchinsky**, editor of *Hot and Bothered: Short Short Fiction of Lesbian Desire*, walks a rocky road with her very butch lesbian character Nomi and Nomi's very Queens Jewish family. Features a full array of passionate crushes, an unlikely Washington-created-AIDS plot twist, and Nomi's well-meaning "Ma," who just can't help hoping her daughter will someday "You know, . . . " make matzoh balls for a man.

Our Sometime Sister (Coffee House Press, $22.95): in which Minneapolis writer **Norah Labiner** spices her coming-of-age novel with a hefty helping of Hamlet and a wonderfully wry, wordy protagonist, Pearl, who just happens to be a writer too. Pearl's strategic wrangling with her pipe-dreaming Jewish mother and self-help guru step-father is interwoven with a novel she wrote, creating a book that is at once stunningly literary and personally engaging. A suburban fairy tale, Elsinore castle and all. (Prince Charming not included.)

—SB

Exciting New Fiction



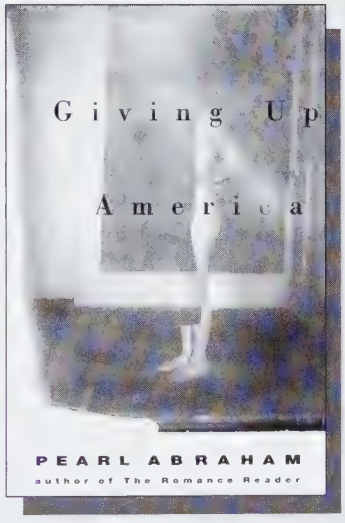
From a Sealed Room

Rachel Kadish

What kind of love can you have in a sealed room? This elegant first novel illustrates that people can learn to love despite the forces that work to shut them in.

"A brilliant, funny, inspired and courageous first novel from a gifted and psychologically wise young writer."
—Carol Gilligan, author of *In a Different Voice*

G. P. Putnam's Sons

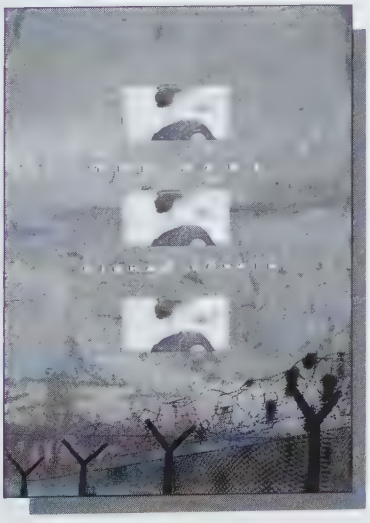


Giving Up America

Pearl Abraham

The critically acclaimed author of *The Romance Reader* creates a stunning portrait of the disintegration of a marriage and the cultural clash between Hasidic and secular American values.

Riverhead Books



The Name

Michal Govrin

A stylistically brilliant, conceptually ambitious, disturbing, and provocative work of fiction that tells of a woman's embrace of mystical Judaism and her parallel descent into madness.

"*The Name* is a shocker. It shows religious and secular culture in a duel so passionate and imaginative that it becomes impossible to tell one from the other."
—David Rosenberg, poet, translator, and coauthor of *The Book of J*

Riverhead Books

The Putnam Publishing Group
A member of Penguin Putnam Inc.

GIRLS: Resilient and Resourceful

This year LILITH's fall book feature focuses on the elusive crossover category known as "young adult" books. These are volumes that bookstores and libraries often can't figure out where to shelve. Their designated audience (adolescents) is already browsing freely in the general adult collection, yet adults too can lose and find themselves in this genre. Reviewed here (mostly by LILITH's cadre of twenty-something interns) are several books that should draw in teens and grownups too; they strike just the right chord about the heartfelt struggle to mature under tough circumstances.

Habibi

by Naomi Shihab Nye
Simon & Schuster, $16.

The Space Between Our Footsteps: Poems and Paintings from the Middle East

Selected by Naomi Shihab Nye
Simon & Schuster, $19.95. Ages 12 and up.

Liyana Abboud is just savoring her first kiss when she learns that her family is moving to her father's homeland of Palestine. Her father is Arabic, her mother is American, and she, a "half-half," has lived all her life in St. Louis. *Habibi* ("my pal" or "my dear" in Arabic slang) relates how Liyana navigates the shifting boundaries of adolescence within the unknown spaces of a new land, examining the nature both of identity and difference.

Living in a house halfway between Ramallah, where their Muslim family lives, and Jerusalem, Liyana confronts and ultimately inhabits a world where women dress traditionally and abide by strict cultural codes. Girls sew and pick lentils and carry water on their heads. They do not wear shorts. They do not kiss romantically before marriage.

Each character is nicely crafted, but our guide, Liyana, is perfect. She is a true heroine, intelligent, resourceful and sensitive. Best of all, she is a journal-writer and keen observer who populates the story with poetic reflections: "One Indian lady in a purple sari crying. The size of good-bye."

While constantly reminded to be "appropriate," Liyana does not fail to exert her independence. This rebellion ranges from combing her hair outdoors to initiating a relationship with a boy who she later learns is Jewish. Facilitated by friendship, Liyana and Omer comfortably discuss Arab-Jewish relations, and even the prickly nature of religion.

Written from a refreshing Arab-American perspective from an evolving teenage girl, this is not a one-sided diatribe but a touching tale of friendship and understanding over politics and hatred. Along the way, Liyana will take readers on a fascinating journey through the sights, sounds and subtleties of life in the Middle East.

The journey continues in Nye's anthology of poetry and art from the Middle East, *The Space Between Our Footsteps*. This beautifully designed book features writers and artists from 20 different Middle Eastern countries, and includes both Yehuda Amichai and Hanan Ashrawi. The songs and souls of the Middle East emanate from every page, in poems about childhood, nature, love and the pain of exile. The artwork is colorful and sensuous, revealing the bright eyes of veiled women, the chaotic order of cluttered villages and the peaceful simplicity of a flat, blue horizon.

Like *Habibi*, this book provides a powerful window on a culture that, to many Americans, often seems encased in walls.

—Tamara Fishman

Greater than Angels

by Carol Matas
Simon & Schuster, $16. Ages 12 and up.

Greater than Angels, a story about an adolescent girl's struggle to survive the Holocaust, is another successful contribution by Carol Matas to help children understand the Holocaust. When Anna Hirsch and her family are deported to Gurs, a French refugee camp, Anna rises to the challenge of inspiring her friends and family to remain optimistic—and even joyful. She uses her talent for singing and telling jokes to comfort both herself and other refugees, and bravely leads her friends out of dangerous situations.

Matas not only presents readers with a strong female protagonist but also demonstrates that some Gentiles were willing to risk their lives to aid Jews. For instance, Anna and many other children were brought from the camp to a small village that became known as a place where any Jew could find shelter. In this village Anna again arises as a resilient figure who helps her friend make and deliver false identity papers for Jews in hiding. Though Anna's constant calmness and maturity seem rather unrealistic, her strength and willfulness are nevertheless inspiring.

—Rachel T. Harris

Katarína

by Kathryn Winter
Farrar Straus Giroux, $17. Ages 10 and up.

Katarína is a nine-year-old orphan living with her secular Aunt Lena in Slovakia when the Nazis invade. Her aunt devises ingenious schemes to avoid deportation, but Katarína ultimately is sent to a small village where she hides under the identity of a Christian orphan. When the villagers discover that Katarína is a Jew, the family she is living with sends her off to fend for herself.

Taught by her family's Christian maid to believe in Catholicism, Katarína cannot understand why people consider her a Jew. Winter does an excellent job of conveying Katarína's confusion and sorrow, and yet confidence that her life will return to the way it was before. Gradually, Katarína abandons the Catholic saints and accepts her Jewishness, but when the leaders of a Protestant orphanage where she is hiding ask her to teach them about Chanukah, Katarína realizes that she knows nothing about her religion and resolves to learn about it. The story is told primarily in Katarína's voice but the creative use of different tools—letters from Katarína to her friend, the perspectives of villagers, and Katarína's conversations with her stuffed monkey—make this story interesting for both children and adult readers.

—RTH

Snowdrops for Cousin Ruth

by Susan Katz
Simon & Schuster, $16. Ages 8-10.

In this engaging first novel, Susan Katz uses a child's perspective to describe how a family deals with a youngster's death and gradually accepts joy back into their home. Johanna was in third grade when her younger brother, Johnny, was killed by a car that spun out of control on an icy road. His twin sister stopped talking and his parents stopped laughing, but Johanna refused to forget the happy times with her brother. She began to imagine him beside her making the same silly comments that he used to and is the first to learn that her brother continues to live in her heart. Death and mourning (and recovering from the intensity of grief) are difficult concepts for children to grasp; this book is an excellent tool for teaching about these complex issues.

—RTH

Sacred Fires: Berurya A Daughter, A Wife, But First a Woman

by Ronald N. Brown
Gefen Books (12 New St., Merrick, NY 11557), $24.95.

Never mind the subtitle; Berurya, one of a handful of scholarly women mentioned in the Talmud, is best known for two tragic events included in this historic novel. In the first, she prepared her husband Rabbi Meir for the news that their two sons had died by asking him: if someone lends you something of great value, would you return the possession when it was time? In the second, Rabbi Meir, in order to prove his argument that women are by nature faithless and emotional, sends one of his students to test his wife's marital fidelity. Berurya succumbs to temptation and then commits suicide.

Male Role Models

Two engaging books of fiction portray nurturing grandfathers helping their grandsons come to terms with losses. In Paula Fox's *Radiance Descending* (DK Ink), a boy has to unlearn his practice of ignoring his younger brother with Down's Syndrome, a brother whose arrival turned the family's life upside down. In *Sun & Spoon* (Greenwillow) by Kevin Henkes (famed for *Lily's Purple Plastic Purse*), the narrating boy longs for a souvenir of his grandma who recently died. And, finally, one question it is hard not to ask: in 1998 when an ancient Jewish legend is retold—as in the picture book *You Never Know: A Legend of the Lamed Vavniks* by Francine Prose, illustrated by Mark Powdal—where are the females among the 36 righteous of the world?

—Naomi Danis

Set in the land of Israel in the first century of the Common Era, *Sacred Fires* opens when Berurya, as a teenager, witnesses her scholar father, Hananiah ben Teradyon, being burned at the stake by the Romans for refusing to uphold their edict not to teach Torah. She then returns to her parents' village and learns that her mother has been killed and her sister sold into prostitution in Rome. The dramatic story unfolds as she meets Rabbi Meir, who helps her rescue her sister, she and Meir marry and raise a family and both study and teach. Throughout her life Berurya had to deal with the issues of a woman's limited opportunities to learn and teach and to confront authority, especially the authority of her own husband.

Think Twice about Roald Dahl

by Michele Landsberg

The mysterious factory stands in the middle of town behind enormous locked iron gates. Night and day, the tall chimneys belch smoke into the air. No one knows who works there, and "NO-ONE....EVER...COMES ...OUT!"

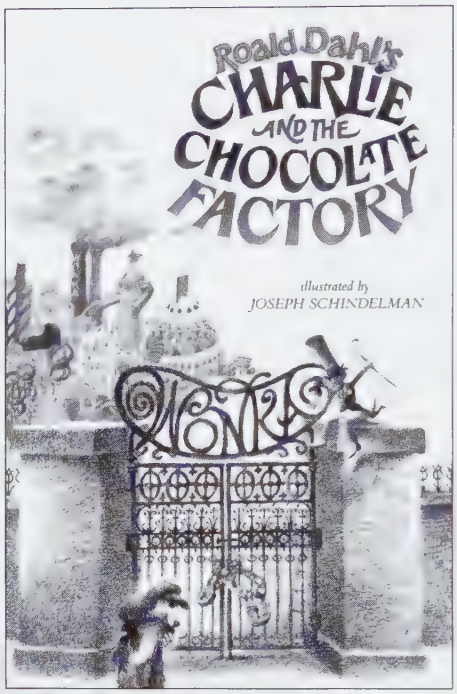
Auschwitz? You'd be forgiven for thinking so, especially when you hear that the factory's chief competitor is another factory-owner called Ficklegruber, a sly play on Hitler's birth-name of Schickelgruber.

But no, this is Willy Wonka's beloved fictional chocolate factory, the centerpiece of Roald Dahl's permanently best-selling children's novel, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, first published in 1964. The ominous emphasis on the fact that no one ever leaves the factory is right there in the original text, capitals, ellipses and all. Dahl may as well have been shouting his analogy to the death camps.

The odd thing about Roald Dahl is that he never made the slightest effort to disguise his unsavory opinions. He openly boasted to an adoring British public that he loathed children.

He never backed away from his overt and scathing anti-Semitism, either, telling the British periodical The New Statesman that "There is a trait in the Jewish character that does provoke animosity...even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason." Dahl also explained his feeling that Jews "had no guts...were submissive" was based on his World War II observation that they "weren't in the [British] armed forces" and went meekly to the gas chambers.

In The Literary Review, writing about the Lebanon war, Dahl declared himself "violently anti-Israeli" and wondered, "Is the American President and the Senate and the Congress so utterly dominated by the great Jewish financial institutions over there that they dare not defy them?" He calmly asserted that "Mr. Begin and Mr. Sharon are almost the exact carbon copies in miniature of Mr. Hitler and Mr. Goering...equally bloodthirsty."



Roald Dahl's own private Final Solution

Echoes of this world-view, alas, reverberate throughout *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Not only is the factory run by black African pygmies called Oompa-Loompas (slave-like creatures who were hastily whitened by the time of the second edition), but there are disturbing scenes in which naughty children touring the factory are knocked off, one by one. A gruesome fate is reserved for Veruca Salt, the shrill, greedy, spoiled daughter of a swaggering, cigar-smoking American industrialist and his fat wife who has a "huge red mouth." (The family fits several categories of anti-Semitic stereotype). Veruca Salt is pushed down the garbage chute to the incinerator, while the Oompa-Loompas spitefully chant a rhyme about how right it is that she should be forced to associate with garbage like herself, instead of with her former fancy friends. But they don't leave it at that. "And as we very rightly thought/ That in a case like this we ought/ To see the thing completely through/ We've polished off her parents too."

In my critical guide to children's literature, *Reading For the Love of It* (Prentice-Hall, 1986), I laid out this evidence for Roald Dahl's anti-Semitism, and gave examples of his equally virulent misogyny. Throughout his work, evil, domineering, smelly, fat, ugly women are his favorite villains, though, by the '70s, he was clever enough to begin featuring aggressive little girls as protagonists.

A favorite Dahl theme is that of the oppressed child, usually a boy, who turns against and physically destroys his female oppressor. The entire plot of *George's Marvellous Medicine*, for example, consists of George (with his father's connivance) trying to kill his "miserable old pig" of a grandmother with one vile potion after another. His homemade poisons put her through torments that sometimes parody sexual violation: "There's squigglers in my belly! There's

bangers in my bottom!" she shrieks at one point. The story concludes after George finally succeeds in killing her. "He felt quite trembly. He knew something tremendous had taken place that morning. For a few brief moments he had touched with the very tips of his fingers the edge of a magic world." Finis.

Why should all this be drawn to the attention of Lilith readers? Recently, I offered a brief version of this analysis on an Israeli feminist e-mail list where an Israeli educator had expressed interest in finding Hebrew versions of Dahl's "feminist" works. The educator thanked me for the information. But others attacked me as advocating censorship or book-banning—something I hadn't even thought of or mentioned.

One woman vigorously defended Dahl's work as "subversive and provocative…but this is part of their charm." She thought it was "stretching things" to compare Wonka's factory to Auschwitz: "A secluded place where some secret activity is taking place…seems to me innocent and familiar enough." She thought it would be a shame if Dahl's works were "banned" in Israel because of "political correctness."

Her approach is worth mentioning only because it is so familiar. When my book first appeared, some teachers and librarians were particularly defensive, partly because Dahl's books were the only ones guaranteed to hold boys enthralled at story-time, and partly, I think, out of embarrassment that they hadn't themselves picked up on the woman-hating themes.

But it is too easy—even intellectually lazy—to close one's mind to textual analysis of children's books, or attempt to dismiss and silence critics, on the grounds that any critique is merely "politically correct" or a summons to a book-burning.

The opposite is true: responsible adults have an obligation, surely, to know what they are encouraging their children to read. Awareness doesn't automatically imply censorship.

I find Dahl's chocolate-coated, sickly sweet fascism a nauseating experience; you may not. But before you invite your children to share the treat, you may want to go farther than reading the book jacket "label." You may want to check out the ingredients for yourself, and be ready with antidotes to any toxic elements.

Michele Landsberg is a feminist columnist for The Toronto Star and a best-selling Canadian author of three books.

This book reconstucts the difficult life of a courageous woman with a great mind and a generous spirit. It fills in some important blanks in a period that gave birth to rabbinic Judaism, an era of great creativity in the face of tragedy. *—ND*

No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War

by Anita Lobel
Greenwillow, $16. Ages 10 and up.

This riveting childhood autobiography by an award-winning author and illustrator (*On Market Street*) tells of her survival in Poland from the age of five, when she was sent off by her Jewish parents in the protection of their Catholic nanny with her two-year-old brother, whom they dressed as a girl to disguise his Jewishness. It is laced with fresh sensory impressions, first of the orderly life before the war, the smell of her father's clean-shaven hug before he would leave for work in the morning, the taste of crispy fried bacon served surreptitiously in the kitchen by the nanny. Later, in the zig-zag of life on the run, we read of the ubiquitousness of lice; stifling the urge to speak while hiding in cramped quarters; a risky ride on a carousel. Her childlike prayer that the Virgin Mother would save her, the awkwardness of reuniting with her parents as an adolescent when the war was over, and her aversion to identifying herself as a Jew illuminate some of the collateral damage suffered by those who survived, especially as children. With a bright palette and great respect for her materials she has taken her unspeakably awful experience and crafted a beautiful story. *—ND*

The Primrose Path

by Carol Matas
Blizzard Publishing (73 Furby St., Winnipeg MB Canada R3C 2A2), $7.95.

At 13, Debbie thinks life is going well. She has a best friend and she's deep into the youth group at her family's Reform temple. Then her parents move the family across the country, and she is enrolled in a school attached to an Orthodox synagogue. The rabbi, who is her teacher, brings Torah stories to life, tells jokes, and, strangest of all, tickles and teases the girls.

Debbie's new friends fill her in on inside jokes, teach her Orthodox customs (like covering her arms and legs even in hot weather), and decode the unfamiliar rituals. But one thing remains a mystery: the rabbi continually does things like touch the girls' breasts, or put his hands in between their legs. Why, she asks herself, does the rabbi touch the girls in places that no person should?

Finally she tells her father what she's been witnessing.

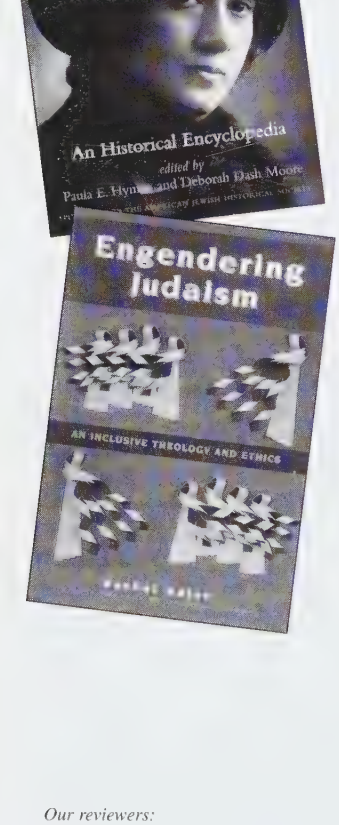
The synagogue's board asks Debbie to testify in front of the rabbi. Before long, other grown women come forward and tell similar stories of when the rabbi molested them. The rabbi at first convinces the board that the women are lying. As the days go on, more people, including Debbie's own mother, begin to tell stories of the rabbi's misconduct.

This young adolescent, struggling with the difficult issues of whom to tell, how much to tell, and how to confront authority figures, realizes she has done the right thing because she helped prevent the problem from recurring. ■

—Robyn Schmones

reviews

Three Powerful New Books



Jewish Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia

edited by Paula E. Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore
Routledge, $250, 2 volumes, 1,770 pages

I have to express my excitement at the astonishingly comprehensive and pioneering contribution Paula Hyman and Deborah Dash Moore have constructed. A treasure-trove for future scholarship in the humanities, *Jewish Women in America* will become an indispensable research tool for anyone interested in the history of Judaism, women's issues, and American culture.

An example: Composed by Anne Lapidus Lerner, one of the hundreds who contributed research and writing, the *Encyclopedia* essay on LILITH magazine begins with its founding in 1976 by Susan Weidman Schneider and others, remarks on its highly educated readership, explains the character of the mythic madwoman Lilith, describes the magazine's commitment to feminism and Judaism, includes a photograph of the premiere issue's cover, and then analyzes especially important articles (about JAP-baiting on campus, feminist philanthropy and women's rights in Judaism) that appeared in its pages. With considerable range and attention to detail, this entry typifies the 800 individual biographies and 110 topical articles.

The biographies include educators, social workers, community activists, paleontologists, medical sociologists, charitable volunteers, socialist journalists, dancers, archeologists, philanthropists, pianists, birth controllers, businesswomen, even doll makers. The topical essays cover such subjects as "Assimilation of Nineteenth-Century Jewish Women," "Colonial Entrepreneurs," "Food," "Reconstructionist Judaism," "Sephardi Women" and "Vaudeville."

Any reader can quibble with editorial choices excluding particularly notable Jewish American women. However, what won't be found pales in comparison to what is found between these covers. First, there is the often pleasurable shock of "I didn't know *she* was Jewish!" I felt this way reading about Jane Bowles, Carol Gilligan, Goldie Hawn, Louise Nevelson, Ayn Rand.

Second, there is the pure excitement of intellectual discovery. One example will suffice to explain my exhilaration: Hannah Wilke (1940-1993), a performance artist who used her own body as a vehicle to come to terms with various representations of femininity. According to Debra Wachks' entry, Wilke's "S.O.S.—Scarification Object Series" of the mid-1970s creates the illusion of scars on the artist's body and this "'scarification' links beauty with vulnerability and death, via such references as numbered tattoos on Holocaust victims and African cicatrization." By the time you read this review, will have trotted over to the art museum library to check out Wilke's works. Anyone who flips through *Jewish Women in America* will discover other such unexpected narratives.

—*Susan Guba*

Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics

by Rachel Adler, with a preface by David Ellenson
The Jewish Publication Society, $34.95

Almost thirty years ago, Rachel Adler published an essay called "The Jew Who Wasn't There: Halakha and the Jewish Woman." In it she argued as a then-Orthodox woman that the classical Jewish tradition marginalizes and degrades women, and that either *halachic* authorities should begin using *halachic* means to heal the wrongs, or women should "take steps to amend *halacha"* (Jewish law) themselves. Naturally, a storm followed. Adler was accused by learned Jewish scholars and rabbis of ignorance; if she were properly versed in Jewish learning (which of course was inaccessible to women—a nice Catch-22) she would recognize her errors. Even worse, she was accused of secularism (i.e., feminism).

Well, rabbinic authority has not exactly risen to the challenge of self-scrutiny regarding women and women's issues. But women have, and Adler has been in the vanguard of feminist writers working to imagine a Judaism that will be truly "inclusive," not simply permitting participation in religious forms that treat women as second class or slapping band-aids on top of deep spiritual wounds. Seeking a Jewish justice built on the spiritual, moral and intellectual needs and insights of women as well as men, Adler has engaged in friendly debate with feminists like Judith Plaskow, Ellen Umansky and Marcia Falk. *Engendering Judaism,* summarizing the thinking of a lifetime, is the first major work of feminist Jewish theology since Plaskow's *Standing Again at Sinai.*

Though Adler no longer describes herself as Orthodox, this is a book that reaches out toward the whole of *klal Yisrael,* the community of Israel, by combining her rich knowledge of Biblical, Talmudic and Rabbinic texts with strands of feminist thought, legal and ethical philosophy, dashes of folklore, and the salt and pepper of humor and personal experience.

Mixing ingredients is, in fact, Adler's methodology. She likes word-play (itself a key characteristic of Talmudic discourse), but with a twist. So the "engendering" of her title means that Judaism must take account of the female as well as the male gender, but

Our reviewers:
***Susan Gubar** is a Distinguished Professor of English at Indiana University. Most recently she is the author of* Racechanges: Black Skin, White Face in American Culture *(Oxford University Press, 1997).*
***Alicia Ostriker** is a poet, critic and author of, among other books,* The Nakedness of the Fathers: Biblical Visions and Revisions *(Rutgers University Press, 1994).* The Little Space: Poems Selected and New *is forthcoming this fall from the University of Pittsburgh Press.*
***Alice Sparberg Alexiou**, who lives on Long Island, writes frequently about the Christian Right.*

lso that Judaism as a living tradition, not a finished ne, needs to be continually re-conceived. You need wo sexes in order to create. But how are rebirth and ransformation to occur? How can traditions created y and for male privilege change from within?

Adler concentrates on issues in Jewish law, liturgy, sexual ethics and marriage. Unlike some other eminist theologians, Adler wants to keep Jewish eminism rooted in the texts of Jewish law and iturgy while recognizing, resisting, and altering hose elements that demean women. A chief problem for Jewish feminists from the beginning has been the legal exclusion of women from traditional communal prayer as well as the legal negation of women's agency in marriage and divorce proceedings. Orthodox feminists lately have been struggling for reform within a unchanged *halachic* system while non-Orthodox feminists have tended to dismiss the category of Jewish law as totally hopeless. Adler's vision differs from both. Instead of polarizing Jews into "us" and "them," she points out that *halachah* has always been "diverse rather than monolithic," and multiple opinions have always been seen within Judaism as "dispute for the sake of Heaven." So, using the legal theorist Robert Cover's view of law as a bridge between the world we have and the world we seek, she hopes to place Jewish law in the hands of communities committed both to shared practices and to human (including gendered) variousness.

In her discussion of liturgy, Adler surveys a wide range of alternative styles of inclusive liturgy from the sixteenth century to today. She supports the plethora of new prayers, ceremonies and rituals women have been inventing to celebrate women's life cycles—from *b'rit bat* ceremonies to welcome girl babies into the covenant, to ceremonies for first menstruation, to celebrations of Rosh Hodesh, the new moon, to rituals to honor women's entrance into old age. Women's prayer groups and women's seders have also multiplied, and are "valuable because they articulate the possibility for holiness in women's experiences" and offer "new language and imagery about God and about the praying community." Even more important, Adler feels, is the creation of progressive prayer books which engage both men and women. This is not just a matter of making female God-language an option which lets some people pray to the Shekhinah while others do "real" prayers, or of keeping patriarchal language in Hebrew while offering gender-neutral versions in English. For Adler argues that Hebrew is at the core of Jewish worship, and that the power of community prayer is indivisible from community ethics.

Adler's marriage ritual, or lovers' covenant, derives from partnership law instead of the law of acquisition and possession.

40,000 Jews
50,000 Opinions
Come add yours

JEWISH.COMMUNITY

Over 40,000 people each month visit Jewish.Community Online at AOL. They schmooze, flirt, learn, and of course, argue.

On America Online at Keyword: JEWISH
For a start-up kit with 50 FREE hours, call
1•800•729•4499
...and read Lilith
at Keyword: JEWISH NEWS

AMERICA Online

RUTGERS
UNIVERSITY PRESS

ANNE FRANK AND ETTY HILLESUM
INSCRIBING SPIRITUALITY AND SEXUALITY
DENISE DE COSTA
Translated by Mischa F.C. Hoyinck and Robert E. Chesal
Studies of Nazi persecution and destruction of Jews have to date largely been based on the accounts of men. And yet gender difference in Western society is so profound that women and men seem to have divergent experiences, speak different languages, and see and hear in dissimilar ways. Denise de Costa's book explores the significance of sex and gender differences in the construction of history and society—specifically, the Nazi genocide of Jews in World War II—by focusing on the writing of two Jewish women, Anne Frank and Etty Hillesum.

304 pp. 11 b & w illus.
Paper, $20.00s, Cloth, $50.00ss

Available in bookstores or call (800) 446-9323

HaSha'ar — Preparing Leaders to Transform Jewish Education

DRISHA INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION and BEIT RABBAN CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN JEWISH EDUCATION are pleased to announce the establishment of

HA SHA'AR
A PROGRAM OF JEWISH STUDIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR FUTURE DAY SCHOOL EDUCATORS

HASHA'AR IS DESIGNED to encourage exceptional young women and men who are devoted to Jewish learning to pursue careers in Jewish education.

Fellows receive an $18,000 stipend to support their participation in a unique, year-long program which integrates the study of Jewish texts and the ideas and practice of education.

Fellows commit to teaching in a day school for the following two years, while receiving ongoing support and professional development from the HaSha'ar faculty.

We welcome inquiries from potential applicants and other interested members of the community.

Fellowship cycle begins July 1999. Applications now available.

For further information contact RUTH FAGEN, Associate Director
131 West 86th Street • New York, NY 10024
Phone (212) 595-0307 • Fax (212) 595-0679 • Email hashaar@beitrabban-drisha.org

HaSha'ar is funded by a major grant from the Nash Family Foundation

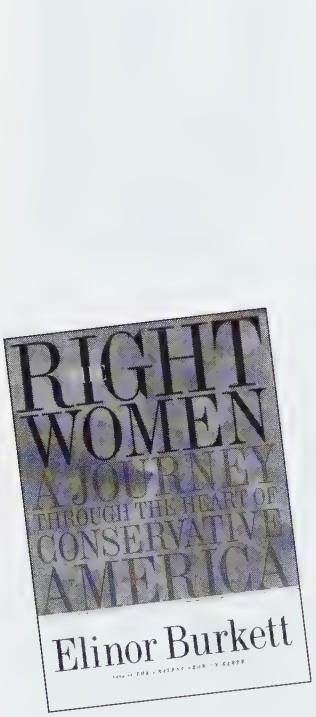
other models: the mysteriously androgynous God and *adam* of Genesis 1, the joyous and mutual sensuousness of the Song of Songs, the generous loving-kindness *chesed*, described in the Book of Ruth, and the lawbreaking "covenant marriage" between God and Israel described in Hosea.

As the climax of *Engendering Judaism*, Adler argues for a radical reconceptualization of the Jewish wedding ritual and of the meaning of marriage, based on covenant instead of ownership. Her *b'rit ahuvim*, or lovers' covenant, is a practical and beautiful design that retains "as many elements of the traditional ceremony as possible," but derives from partnership law instead of the law of acquisition and possession. The idea is that the couple is joining in a mutual commitment of equals to share a love that may have mortal faults yet comes ultimately from the love God offers us and asks of us. Not coincidentally, variants of Adler's proposed ceremony would be available for same-sex couples. When I read this chapter, with its carefully thought out details, its clear yearning for a better way Jews could find to spend lifetimes together, and its yearning as well for a way to re-knit the loosened ties between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, I felt a pang. I wish this ceremony had been available when my daughter was married. Will young people across the spectrum of Jewishness embrace Adler's wishes for them? Will their rabbis ultimately share Adler's idealistic hopes? Surely her ideas will be hotly debated. If received in the spirit with which they are offered, this too will be a dispute "for the sake of heaven."

—Alicia Ostriker

If it matters how we imagine God, how can we make new metaphors for God beyond the masculine images of father, king, warrior, etc.? Adler praises the "radiantly beautiful feminist liturgical Hebrew" in Marcia Falk's *Book of Blessings*. But she also worries about visions of God (like Falk's) that reject anthropomorphism. Adler insists on a personalized God, not an abstraction. "We cannot talk about the God of Israel," she claims, "without talking about the Creator, dweller in the thornbush, liberator, covenanter, nursing mother, adversary, voice in the whirlwind, scribe, judge, and exiled Shekhina. . . . Only through stories can we glimpse the wildness of God, of infinite and untrammeled possibility, untamable within the confines of any systematic theology." But in order "to grow a prayer language that is authentic and inclusive and powerful" for our own time, we need *more* stories, more metaphors, more images.

The final chapters of this groundbreaking book address questions of sexuality and marriage definitively. Like Judith Plaskow, Adler sees Jewish tradition on sexuality as divided. On the one hand are rigid legal codes in which women are property, and on the other hand are poems and stories which celebrate a loving equality between the sexes, human generosity, and even divine violation of law. Critiquing the "dominance and submission" view of relationships stemming from Genesis 2, she offers



The Right Women: A Journey Through Conservative America

by Elinor Burkett
Scribner, $23

Just one generation has passed since the modern feminist movement joined forces with other American movements in protesting the status quo, and the country has veered strikingly to the right. The political activists of yore, demanding that the government feed the cities and starve the war machines are but a quaint memory. In their place has stepped the politically powerful Christian right, with what it coyly calls its "pro-family" values—which organizations like NOW read as code for anti-homosexual, anti-choice and ultimately anti-woman.

So how is the feminist movement faring now, at

a time when "femi-nazi," courtesy of Rush Limbaugh, is part of the American lexicon and the cover of Time Magazine asks, "Is Feminism Dead?"?

Not to worry, at least according to journalist Elinor Burkett, a self-described pushy New York Jewish feminist. In her book *The Right Women: A Journey Through Conservative America*, Burkett argues that feminism, despite the strength of movements like the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family, is alive and well. It "has grown wild across the land," she says, and has taken root—albeit invisibly—deep in psyches of even the most conservative of American women.

During a two-year trek across America, Burkett met with a colorful range of right-wing women. She found that even though they reject feminism per se—and often vociferously—as an exclusively liberal ideology, they take for granted many of the gains that the women's movement achieved. And while Burkett is irked by the lack of gratitude, she is still gratified to find that feminism, like it or not, is now part and parcel of American values.

In her snappy prose, Burkett introduces us to some fascinating characters. There is Nona Brazier, a black conservative who opposes affirmative action and ran for governor of Washington; Kay Shiel of suburban Kansas City, a housewife who heads a militia group ("I resent the assumption that militia members are all racist pigs."); Elizabeth Holscher, a fundamentalist Christian in upstate New York who home-schools her five children and tells Burkett that she feels bad for feminists. "They're missing out on something special God has for them," she says.

The '94 Republican sweep in Congress included seven Republican women, the most ever elected in one year. These feisty women pols, who seemed to embody feminist ideals, made a vociferous point of separating themselves from the movement. Burkett quotes Representative Barbara Cubin of Wyoming, who after the election rejoiced: "There's not a femi-nazi among us!"

Oddly, Burkett does not take offense. Instead, she criticizes her beloved feminism, faulting its adherents for their attacks on housewives and prolifers, i.e. women who disagree with traditional feminist ideology. While some may feel that this critique lets conservative women too easily off the hook, Burkett's willingness to ponder all sides of this debate is what makes this book a most provocative and valuable read. ■

—Alice Sparberg Alexiou

DRISHA INSTITUTE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION
דרישה
CELEBRATING 20 YEARS! CELEBRATING 20 YEARS!
ADVANCING WOMEN'S LEARNING · INSPIRING WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

Meet the Teachers, Sample a Lecture - Wed., Sept. 2nd, 6:30 p.m. Free!
Fall semester courses begin Sept. 8th

Courses in Talmud, Bible, Jewish Law, Philosophy and Rabbinics
at Beginning to Advanced Levels

Inquire about the Drisha Audio Tape Project, lectures linked to the holidays, inlcuding Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, by Rabbi David Silber

131 WEST 86TH ST. · NEW YORK, NY 10024
PH:(212) 595-0307 · FAX: (212) 595-0679 · drisha@inquiry.org

Bring Us the Old People
A NOVEL BY MARISA KANTOR STARK

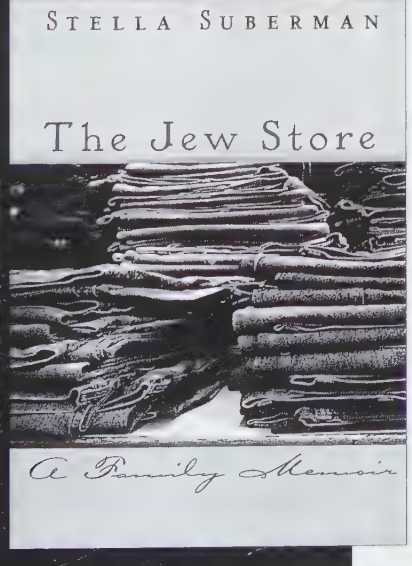
"Maime's voice . . . is the voice of the modern world, its horrors and triumphs . . . of one who has seen the worst that humanity is capable of, and on a small scale, the best, and has lived to tell the tale."
—Russell Banks

$22.95 HC

NEW FROM COFFEE HOUSE PRESS

Available at fine bookstores or Coffee House Press: 612-338-0125. Distributed by Consortium Book Sales & Distribution: 1-800-283-3572.

"AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE ON ALL FRONTS . . ."*



$19.95 hc, 312 pp, September
Look for it in your favorite bookstore.

The Jew Store is that rare thing—an intimate family story that sheds new light on a piece of American history.

"Suberman tells the remarkable story of her family's sojourn as the only Jews in a small Tennessee town during the 1920s with **such sparkle it reads like a novel.**"
—*Booklist*, starred review

"A richly detailed memoir."
—*Publishers Weekly*

"By turns **charming, funny, and moving . . .** vividly told and captivating in its humanity."
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill
a division of Workman Publishing
P.O. Box 2225 • Chapel Hill, NC 27515

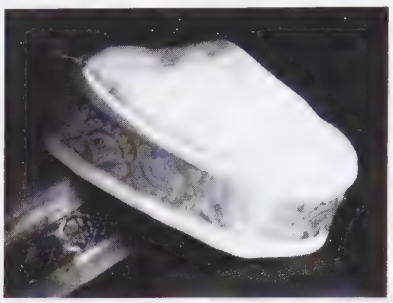
© 1998 Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill

Glorious Crowns®

New From Harwin Studios! Rainbow Crowns for Children—Available now

ELEGANT KIPPOT FOR CONTEMPORARY JEWISH WOMEN

Glorious Crowns have been designed by Sara Harwin in the Bokharan style. Each hat is made of fine European embroidered ribbon on Ultrasuede. Many colors and sizes available.



Glorious Crowns® by

Harwin Studios
9101 SW 15 Ave
Portland, Oregon
97219
(503) 245-8900
(503) 246-7479
info@harwinstudios.com
www.harwinstudios.com

Adios, Barbie.

Finally—a magazine for women of every culture and size!

HUES

Six issues for $19.99

HUES • PO Box 3587
Duluth, MN 55803-3587
MC/VISA: (800)HUES-4U2

New Moon Magazine

. . . for girls and their dreams

1-800-381-4743

Fine Quality Jewish Persian Rugs

Judaic Designs Co.

PO Box 194
Mainland,
PA 19451
215-256-3119
fax 215-256-1647

http://www.finejudaica.com

It's time to wear your own one-of-a-kind **hand painted silk tallit** created by internationally recognized textile artist, **Nancy Katz.**

Write or call for a brochure today.
Box 11215 ✡ Berkeley, CA 94701
510/843-5280
nkatzart@aol.com

MIRAJ

Original a capella Jewish music that **MOVES** the soul!
Concerts/Workshops/Rituals
For bookings: (610) 771-0831 Email: mirajtrio@aol.com
To order recordings: 1-800-9-Sound-9
"A toe-tapping, finger-snapping, hand-clapping tour de force!"

Inspiring, Feminist,
Judaic Jewelry
by
Nomi

For a free catalog:
505-989-3880 505-820-7635 Fax
E-MAIL: nomi@sfol.com
P.O. Box 15702, Santa Fe, NM 87506

A FEYGELE ZINGT

an anthology of Yiddish Theater and Folksongs
sung by ***Faye Kellerstein***
You read her delightful article in last Fall's LILITH!

"Kellerstein has a vocal warmth which ignites the senses."
(RPM Magazine)

One of Canada's finest interpreters of Yiddish, Faye is also a dynamic entertainer and speaker, specializing in musical programs on Jewish themes.

For booking information or to order a cassette or CD of
A Feygele Zingt, call **1-800-342-7664 (SONG)**

vagina monologue

continued from page 48

closed his car door, I closed the whole store. Locked it. Never opened for business again. I dated some after that, but the idea of flooding made me too nervous. I never even got close again.

I used to have dreams, crazy dreams. Oh, they're dopey. Why? Burt Reynolds. I don't know why. He never did much for me in life, but in my dreams…it was always Burt. It was always the same general dream. We'd be out. Burt and I. It was some restaurant like the kind you see in Atlantic City, all big with chandeliers and stuff and thousands of waiters with vests on. Burt would give me this orchid corsage. I'd pin it on my blazer. We'd laugh. Eat shrimp cocktail. Huge shrimp, fabulous shrimp. We'd laugh more. We were very happy together. Then he'd look into my eyes and pull me to him in the middle of the restaurant—and, just as he was about to kiss me, the room would start to shake, pigeons would fly out from under the table—I don't know what those pigeons were doing there—and the flood would come straight from down there. It would pour out of me. It would pour and pour. There would be fish inside it, and little boats, and the whole restaurant would fill with water, and Burt would be standing knee-deep in my flood, looking horribly disappointed in me that I'd done it again, horrified as he watched his friends, Dean Martin and the like, swim past us in their tuxedos and evening gowns.

I don't have those dreams anymore. Not since they took away just about everything connected with down there. Moved out the uterus, the tubes, the whole works. The doctor thought he was being funny. He told me if you don't use it, you lose it. But really I found out it was cancer. Everything around it had to go. Who needs it, anyway? Right? Highly overrated. I've done other things. I love the dog show. I sell antiques.

What would it wear? What kind of question is that? What would it wear? It would wear a big sign:

"Closed Due to Flooding."

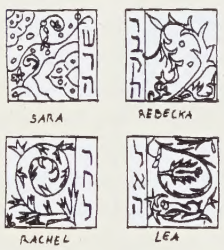
What would it say? I told you. It's not like that. It's not like a person who speaks. It stopped being a thing that talked a long time ago. It's a place. A place you don't go. It's closed up, under the house. It's down there. You happy? You made me talk—you got it out of me. You got an old lady to talk about her down-there. You feel better now? [Turns away; turns back.]

You know, actually, you're the first person I ever talked to about this, and I feel a little better. ■

ADORNMENTS

Break the Glass Ceiling—a brooch created by Shahar Benor symbolizes women's right to equal opportunities and high-level positions. Purchase it to help the Israel Women's Network lobby on behalf of women. $25 from *American Friends of IWN, 20301 NE 30 Ave. #202, Aventura, FL; (305)931-3818; fax (305)931-3818.*

Our Four Mothers. A tallit with embroidered flowers and the names of Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah in the corners was created by Yair and Yael Emanuel. $200 for tallit, bag and kipah,



payable to International Committee for Women of the Wall, helps women achieve religious equality in Israel. *Sheilah Kalderon, 11100 Valley Heights Dr., Owings Mills, MD 21117; (410)363-0335; sheilahsi@aol.com*

Jewish women through the ages, LILITH's time line poster, was originally created to mark the magazine's 20th anniversary. This full-size poster, suitable for college dormitories, camps, schools is $20 from *LILITH Magazine, 250 W. 57th St., #2432, New York, NY 10107.*

YOUR WORK HERE

Jewish Mothers! Speak up now! For a book to be edited by Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, Ellen Cole and Susan Steinberg-Oren, send unpublished personal narratives or vignettes by Jewish mothers of all ages and backgrounds, from every kind of Jewish family. Send your one-page proposal in triplicate by October 15 to *Rachel Josefowitz Siegel, 11 Spruce Ln., Ithaca, NY 14850 or rsiegelwow@aol.com*

Motherhood—how is it mediated by law, custom and experience in Jewish contexts? For Nashim, the Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues, send papers from a variety of disciplinary approaches—on parenthood and fatherhood as well—by November 15 to: *Nashim, POB 8600, 91083, Jerusalem, Israel; fax 972-2-6790840; dvorahg@iol.co.il*

Dissemi-nation: Narrating Palestinian Israeli Gendered Auto/biographies of Dislocation is the working title of a proposed volume about the two nations from the perspectives of their most marginalized narrators—women, migrants, emigrants, immigrants, exiles—using women's personal narratives as primary research sources. Send your abstract—up to 200 words—by October 1 to *Ronit Lentin, Sociology Dept., University of Dublin, Trinity College, Dublin 2, Ireland; (353-1)608-2766; fax (353-1)677-1300; rlentin@tcd.ie*

Females with creative minds over 50—help change stereotypes and reclaim the image of the "wise woman." Crone circles? The aging process? Send a one-page summary about yourself and the story or essay you propose to write for an upcoming anthology with a SASE by November 1 to *Wise Woman Writer Contest, Beyond Words Publishing, 20827 NW Cornell Rd. #500, Hillsboro, OR 97124-9808; (503)531-8700; info@beyondword.com*

Arabic/Iranian, Jewish, and Female: Life at the Crossroads of Sexism, Racism, and Anti-Semitism is a forthcoming anthology seeking essays by Mizrahi/Sephardi women who have ties to Jewish communities from Arab countries or Iran. Editor is *Loolwa Khazzoom, (510)843-4068; loolwa@aol.com*

Women in Israeli Culture/Feminist Culture in Israel is the subject of a forthcoming issue of the periodical Israel Affairs (Frank Cass, London). Send 1-2 page abstract of a research paper you would like to submit immediately to *Erella Brown, Dept. of Hebrew and Comparative Literature, Haifa University, Mount Carmel, 31905 Haifa, Israel.*

The Jewish Women's Literary Annual has just released Volume III, available for $7.50; also find out how to contribute your work to the next issue: *The Jewish Women's Resource Center, National Council of Jewish Women, NY Section, 9 E. 69 St., New York, NY 10021; (212)535-5900 x10; JWRC-NCJW@aol.com*

TRAVEL FOR CHANGE

The earth is filled with the breath of life: a workshop—in English—exploring ecology and Judaism will take place at Kibbutz Lotan in the Negev, October 18-24. Plan conservation strategies and learn the connection between environmentalism and Judaism through text study, practical ecological work, small group sessions and Shabbat observance with teachers Phyllis Berman and Rabbi Arthur Waskow. Contact *David Dolev, Kibbutz Lotan; (972-7)635-6935; fax (972-7)635-6827; edt_lot@hotmail.com*

The Compassionate Listening Journey to Israel and the Palestinian Territories provides an opportunity for American Jews to advance reconciliation among Jews and Palestinians—based on the belief that "peace comes through the hard work of meeting one's enemy and coming to know the suffering in each others' hearts." A delegation will be led by Leah Green and Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Kiener, November 4-20. *Leah Green, Compassionate Listening P.O. Box 17, Indianola, WA 98342; (360)297-2280; LGreenInc@aol.com*

Studying Genesis on a ten million year old glacier—is one option for wilderness trips and expeditions with Jewish content. Organized by Bob Greenbaum and Rabbi Niles Goldstein in a project of The Partnership for Jewish Life—a community of New Yorkers in their 20's and 30's. *Jewish Life Network/Adventure Travel Office, 69-844 Highway 111, #H, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270; (800)998-7585.*

CYBERWORLD

The Israel Feminist Forum is an online discussion group for feminist practitioners of women's studies: teachers, students, scholars, writers, administrators and activists who focus on Israel. Information is exchanged on research projects, funding sources, fellowships, job openings, conferences, calls for papers, teaching methods, course syllabi, useful texts, bibliographies, women's studies program development, Israel or national policy issues, and political and theoretical debates on women's studies. *Marilyn Safir, coordinator; iff-l@research.ac.il*

AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Three million women in the U.S. are affected by domestic violence each year. "Judaism and Domestic Violence," a pamphlet, aims to correct the widely held misconception that the Jewish community is immune. Citing texts condemning violence against women, it includes discussion topics on hypothetical situations of suspected violence within synagogue communities, offers program suggestions such as holding a forum on domestic violence, adopting a women's shelter, and posting emergency phone numbers of support services. *Commission on Social Action & Public Policy, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 155 5th Ave., New York, NY 10010; (212)533-7800 x2614; fax (212)353-9439; 71263.270@compuserve.com*

The Survivors of Sexual Assault for Women's Rights Program of Amnesty International helps sexual assault survivors learn about the situation of rape victims around the world. Survivors are empowered to help others through letter-writing; public awareness is encouraged through speaker events about women's international human rights and rape as a human rights issue. Contact founder/coordinator of this program *Sita Baltazar-Thomas, (312)382-9316; sbalthaz@kentlaw.edu*

Stand Up Against Domestic Violence is a comedy show that raises money and awareness. Organized by comedienne Heidi Joyce, a line-up of funny women perform every Sunday afternoon in October and May at the Bitter Truth Theater in North Hollywood. Proceeds benefit a non-profit organization that aids women: *Theatre of Hope for Abused Women, 11050 Magnolia Blvd., North Hollywood, CA 91601; (818)766-9702; fax (818)755-7970.* To bring the show to your community, contact *Heidi Joyce at (818)380-7116.*

A new domestic violence hotline in Miami from the Greater Miami Jewish Federation now reaches out to battered or abused victims in the Jewish community. Trained volunteers provide assistance, support and referral to those who call *(305)576-1818.*

A Conversion to Judaism Home Page has e-mail links to more than 100 rabbis of all denominations who answer questions and help people explore choosing Judaism. Or get a free copy of the brochures "Should I Convert to Judaism?" and "How to Discuss Conversion to Judaism" by Lawrence J. Epstein. *The Conversion to Judaism Resource Center, 74 Hauppauge Rd. #53, Commack, NY 11725; (516)462-5826; www.convert.org*

HOW TO KNOW WHAT TO SAY

Jewish Ethics of Speech: Gossip and Slander by Dawn Robinson Rose explores how gossip is a part of our everyday lives and discusses texts from biblical, rabbinic and medieval sources ($8). **Confronting Mortality and Facing Grief: Jewish Perspectives on Death and Mourning** by Rebecca Alpert aims to help overcome the alienation we often experience around death ($15). These adult education curriculum guides can be used by individuals or groups. *Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, PR Dept., 1299 Church Rd., Wyncote PA, 19095.*

Grandma Please links "latch-key" kids after school with older adults, telephone volunteers who are trained in mediation and encourage children to solve their own problems. From 3pm to 6pm callers to a central number are rerouted to the next available volunteer or to a volunteer the child asks for by name. This project, started in 1985 in Chicago, has ten affiliates nationwide. Send for a brochure to find out how to start a similar program: *Grandma Please, Jane Addams Hull House, 4520 N. Beacon St., Chicago, IL 60640; (773)561-3500; fax (773)561-3507.*

THIS MEANS BUSINESS

On Lee National Denim Day, Friday, October 9, participating companies permit employees to wear denim to work in exchange for a $5 contribution to the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Last year this event raised $3.5 million. Your workplace can participate in this project, organized by the denim manufacturer. Call *(800)688-8508 x303; www.denimday.com/info*

The US Small Business Administration's Online Women's Business Center internet site offers women who want to start or grow businesses information on best business practices, management techniques, networking, industry news, market research and more. It cross-lists individual states with categories such as legal assistance, taxes, environmental and safety regulations and business hotlines. *www.onlinenewbc.org*

TOWARD DIVERSITY

IVRI NASAWI—the National Association of Sephardic Artists Writers Intellectuals, a Jewish multicultural association, encourages an awareness and affinity for Sephardic, Mizrahi and Crypto-Judaic experience; it "exists to preserve our diverse cultural heritage, heal, educate and promote a renewed, more universal Judaism with roots in the East." Join this non-profit membership organization, which publishes a newsletter and sponsors cultural events worldwide, as an artist or as a supporter. *IVRI—NASAWI, 1033 N. Orlando Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90069; (213)650-3157; www.ivri-nasawi.org*

Beginning the Journey: Towards a Women's Commentary on the Torah is a pilot volume "designed to open the eyes of those who do not already understand the integral role of women in the endurance perpetuation and eternity of the body and soul of the Jewish people." Written and edited by women, it contains commentaries on portions of Genesis, Exodus and Numbers. $10 plus $2.25 shipping from *Women of Reform Judaism, 838 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10021.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

Correction: The e-mail address for Kol Ha-Isha, the Jerusalem Women's Center, is *kolisha@netmedia.net.il*

Vagina Monologue

Over the course of the last several years, ***Eve Ensler*** *interviewed over 200 women about their vaginas. The result is a riveting, funny, activist book (and performance piece) called* The Vagina Monologues *(Villard, 1998). In the following excerpt, an older, unnamed Jewish woman—with a Queens accent—pays a visit "down there."*

Down there? I haven't been down there since 1953. No, it had nothing to do with Eisenhower. No, no, it's a cellar down there. It's very damp, clammy. You don't want to go down there. Trust me. You'd get sick. Suffocating. Very nauseating. The smell of the clamminess and the mildew and everything. Whew! Smells unbearable. Gets in your clothes.

No, there was no accident down there. It didn't blow up or catch on fire or anything. It wasn't so dramatic. I mean…well, never mind. No. Never mind. I can't talk to you about this. What's a smart girl like you going around talking to old ladies about their down-theres for? We didn't do this kind of a thing when I was a girl. What? Jesus, okay.

There was this boy, Andy Leftkov. He was cute—well, I thought so. And tall, like me, and I really liked him. He asked me out for a date in his car….

I can't tell you this. I can't do this, talk about down there. You just know it's there. Like the cellar. There's rumbles down there sometimes. You can hear the pipes, and things get caught there, little animals and things, and it gets wet, and sometimes people have to come and plug up the leaks. Otherwise the door stays closed. You forget about it. I mean, it's part of the house, but you don't see it or think about it. It has to be there, though, 'cause every house needs a cellar. Otherwise the bedroom would be in the basement.

Oh, Andy, Andy Leftkov. Right. Andy was very good-looking. He was a catch. That's what we called it in my day. We were in his car, a new white Chevy BelAir. I remember thinking that my legs were too long for the seat. I have long legs. They were bumping up against the dashb
I was looking at my big kneecaps
he just kissed me in this
prisingly "Take m
control like they
the movies" kind of
And I got excited
excited, and, well,
was a flood down t
I couldn't co
it. It was like
force of pas
this river of
just flooded
me, right thr
my panties, right
the car seat of his new white Chevy Be
It wasn't pee and it was smelly—
frankly, I didn't really smell anythi
all, but he said, Andy said, that it sm
like sour milk and it was staining hi
seat. I was "a stinky weird girl," he s
wanted to explain that his kiss had c
me off guard, that I wasn't normally
this. I tried to wipe the flood up wit
dress. It was a new yellow primrose
and it look so ugly with the flood
Andy drove me home and he never,
said another word and when I got ou

continued on pa